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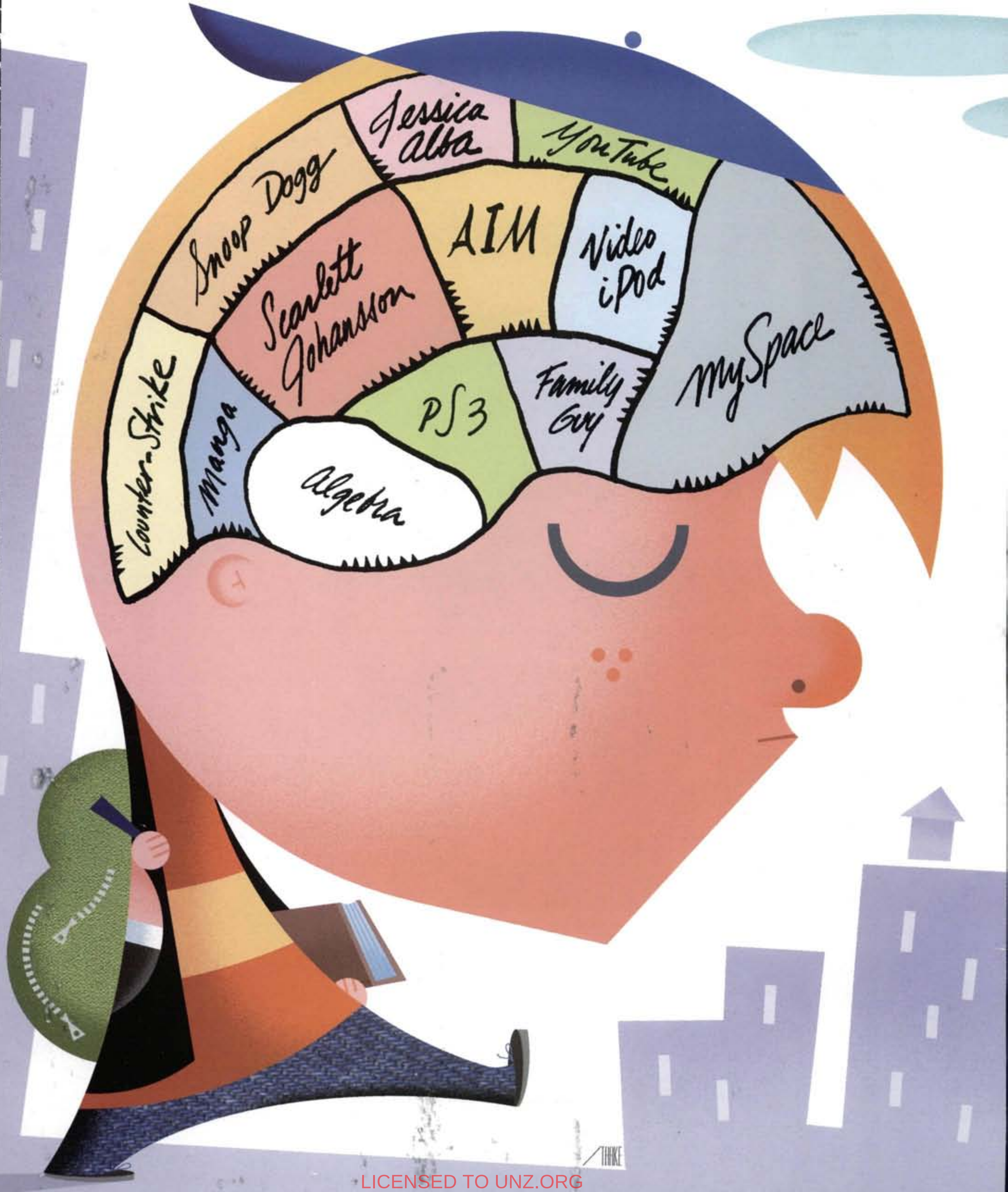
THE NEW YORKER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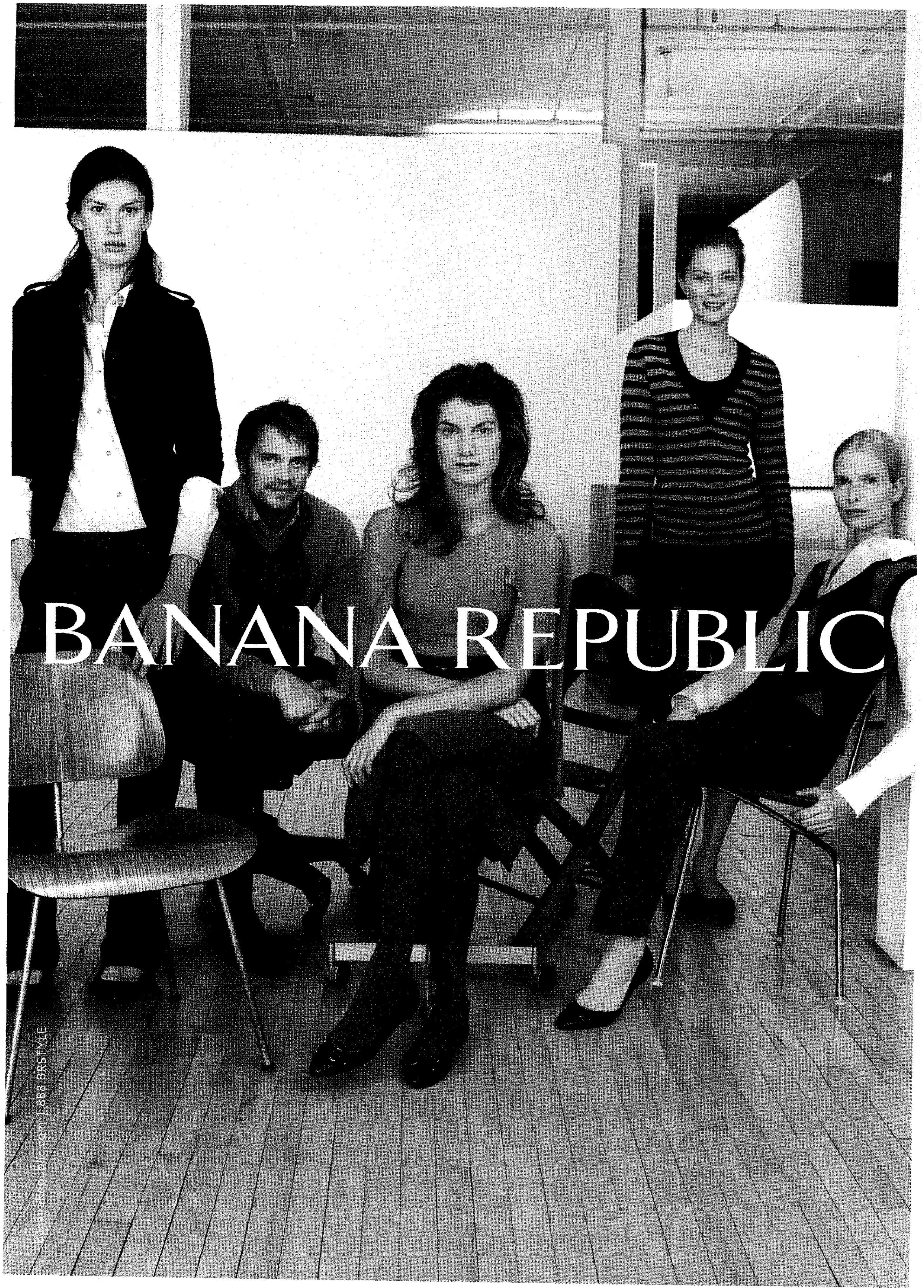
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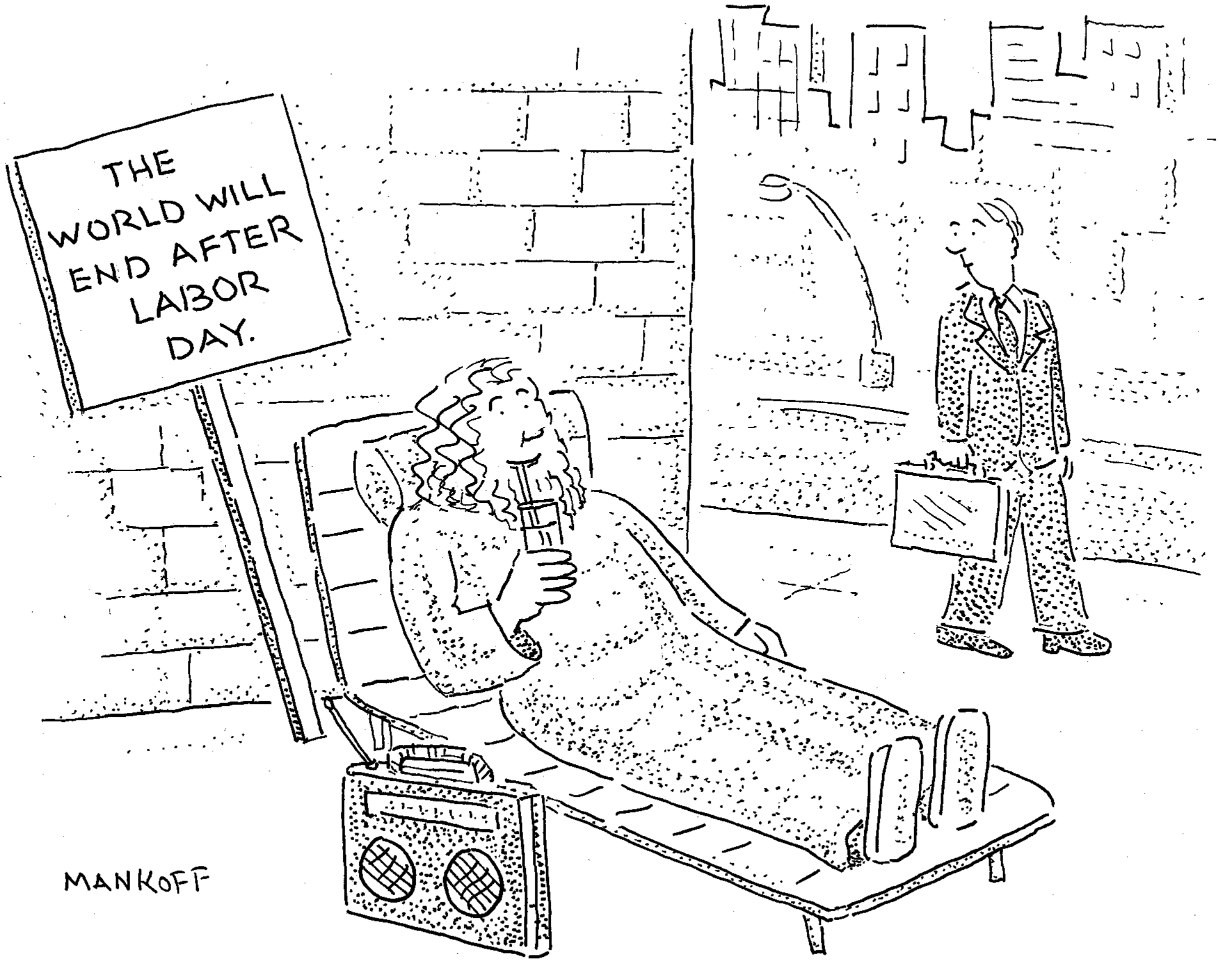
SPOTS *Philippe Petit-Roulet*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CONTRIBUTORS

Peter J. Boyer ("Big Men on Campus," p. 44) has been a staff writer since 1992.

Dana Goodyear ("The Searchers," p. 62) is an editor at the magazine. Her book of poems, "Honey and Junk," comes out in paperback in October.

Burkhard Bilger ("The Lunchroom Rebellion," p. 72), a staff writer, is the author of "Noodling for Flatheads."

Alex Ross ("Learning the Score," p. 82), the magazine's music critic, is working on a book entitled "The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century," which will be published next year.

Kate Julian (The Talk of the Town, p. 41) is a member of the magazine's editorial staff.

Bob Staake (Cover) is a writer and illustrator of children's books, including "The Red Lemon," which will be published next month.

Margaret Talbot ("The Baby Lab," p. 90) is a staff writer and a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation.

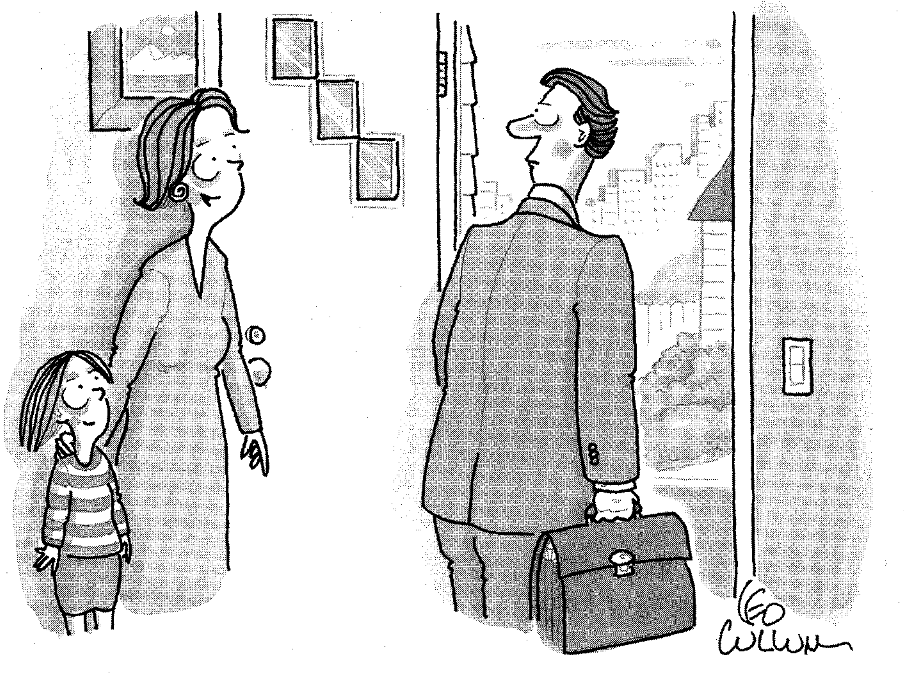
Allen Ginsberg (Poems, pp. 84, 110) died in 1997. "The Book of Martyrdom and Artifice: First Journals and Poems, 1937-1952," comes out in November. Both the poem to Jack Kerouac and "Paterson" were written in 1949, when Ginsberg was twenty-three.

Nick Paumgarten ("Deerfield in the Desert," p. 102) is a staff writer.

Antonya Nelson (Fiction, p. 116) published "Some Fun," a collection of short stories and a novella, in March.

Louis Menand (Books, p. 126) is a professor of English at Harvard and a staff writer. His books include "The Metaphysical Club" and "American Studies."

Roz Chast (Sketchbook, p. 113) has a book of cartoons, "Theories of Everything," coming out in October. ♦



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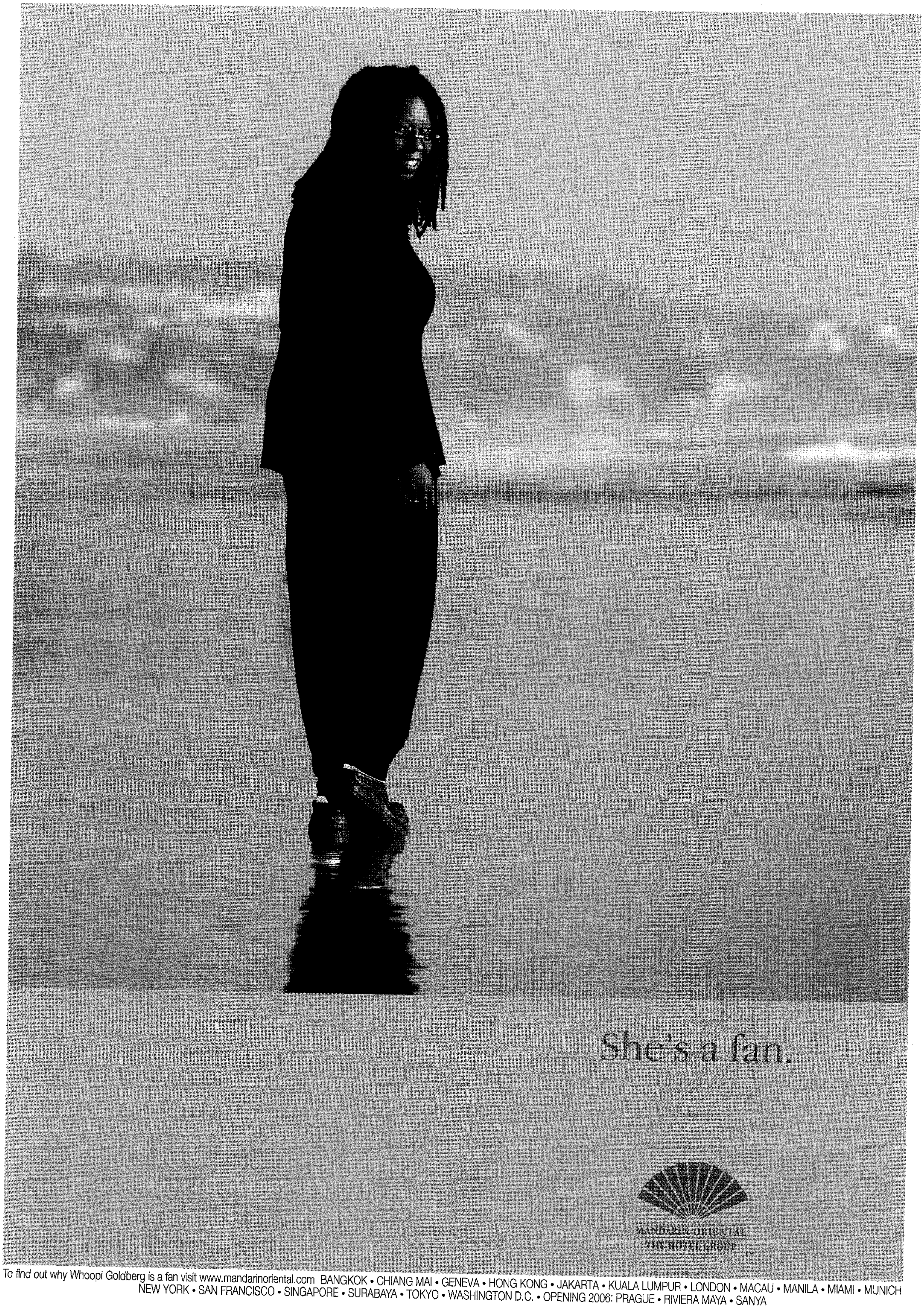

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THE MAIL

WHY BLOGS MATTER

In designating original reporting as the standard by which Internet journalism should be judged, Nicholas Lemann overlooks the very real accomplishments of bloggers ("Amateur Hour," August 7th & 14th). During the run-up to the war in Iraq, there were stories, in both print and broadcast media, contradicting the Administration's claims about Iraq's connection to Al Qaeda and its possession of W.M.D.s. But these stories were intermittent and often languished on back pages—except in the left-wing blogosphere. Similarly, the regular press dismissed bloggers' accusations of voter fraud following the 2004 election as conspiracy theories. By posting reporting by professional journalists like Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman alongside posts from e-voting activists and whistle-blowers, citizen editors like Brad Friedman of the BradBlog have raised public and media awareness of the extremely compromised state of our voting system.

Patricia Goldsmith
Contributor, DissidentVoice.org
DemocraticUnderground.com
OpEdNews.com
Island Park, N.Y.

Lemann writes, "Most citizen journalism reaches very small and specialized audiences and is proudly minor in its concerns." Small? Of course. The Web's astonishingly fast growth is due to a multiplicity of small audiences ranging in size from hundreds to numbers so small that members could convene in an economy car. Specialized? That's how people find each other on the Web, through a digitally mediated collective of niche interests. Proudly minor in our concerns? Yes. We citizen reporters love the trifling concerns, including interviews with child laborers in Cameroon and first-person narratives from victims of torture in Nepal.

Gregory Daigle
Contributor, OhmyNews.com
Minneapolis, Minn.

News outlets still hold the upper hand in their ability to market and advertise a long-standing brand. What's missing is content. There are few visionaries in the conventional media landscape when it comes to identifying ways to use our newest form of technology. The Web is viewed primarily as a distribution mechanism, instead of as a way to solicit new sources of information. As citizen journalism develops, its innovations surely will be co-opted by the larger outlets. Meanwhile, Lemann shouldn't fear that citizen-journalism ventures are attempting to create "journalist-free journalism." If there is a force stealthily advocating journalist-free journalism, it is the executives of news outlets who cut news staffs every year and diminish local content in the hope of attracting younger readers, listeners, and viewers.

Ann Alquist
Co-founder, tcdailyplanet.net
Minneapolis, Minn.

Lemann ignores one crucial development: the collapse of the traditional local press. The vigorous reporting he praises is rare now outside of N.P.R. and a handful of magazines and essentially national papers (the *Times*, the Washington *Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*). Their reporters are not scrappy small-town scribes who "cross the usual bounds of geography and class," as Lemann writes. More often, they live in Washington, D.C., or New York and send their kids to the same private schools as the politicians they cover. Their distance from typical American life is not an invention of the right wing, and it drives many to "citizen journalism," flawed as it may be.

Mark Saltveit
Editor, realchange.org
Portland, Ore.

•

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Theatre for the New City's street musical "Tap Dance." Photograph by Brian Finke.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
UP TO SCRATCH

Playwrights Horizons begins its season with "The Pain and the Itch," a satire by Bruce Norris that premièred, to much acclaim, at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre. Jayne Houdyshell (a Tony nominee for last year's "Well"), who was part of the original cast, joins the ensemble for the New York première. (See page 13.)

NIGHT LIFE
TWISTED LABOR

The three-day New York Burlesque Festival livens up the holiday weekend with acts from around the world, including the kitschy Japanese troupe Murasaki Baby Doll, the fire-eating showgirl Keda Breeze, from London, and the theatrical Montreal ensemble Blue Light Burlesque, all of which are making their New York début. They'll be welcomed by the World Famous Pontani Sisters, Dirty Martini, and other local favorites. (See page 14.)

ART
COLOR THEORY

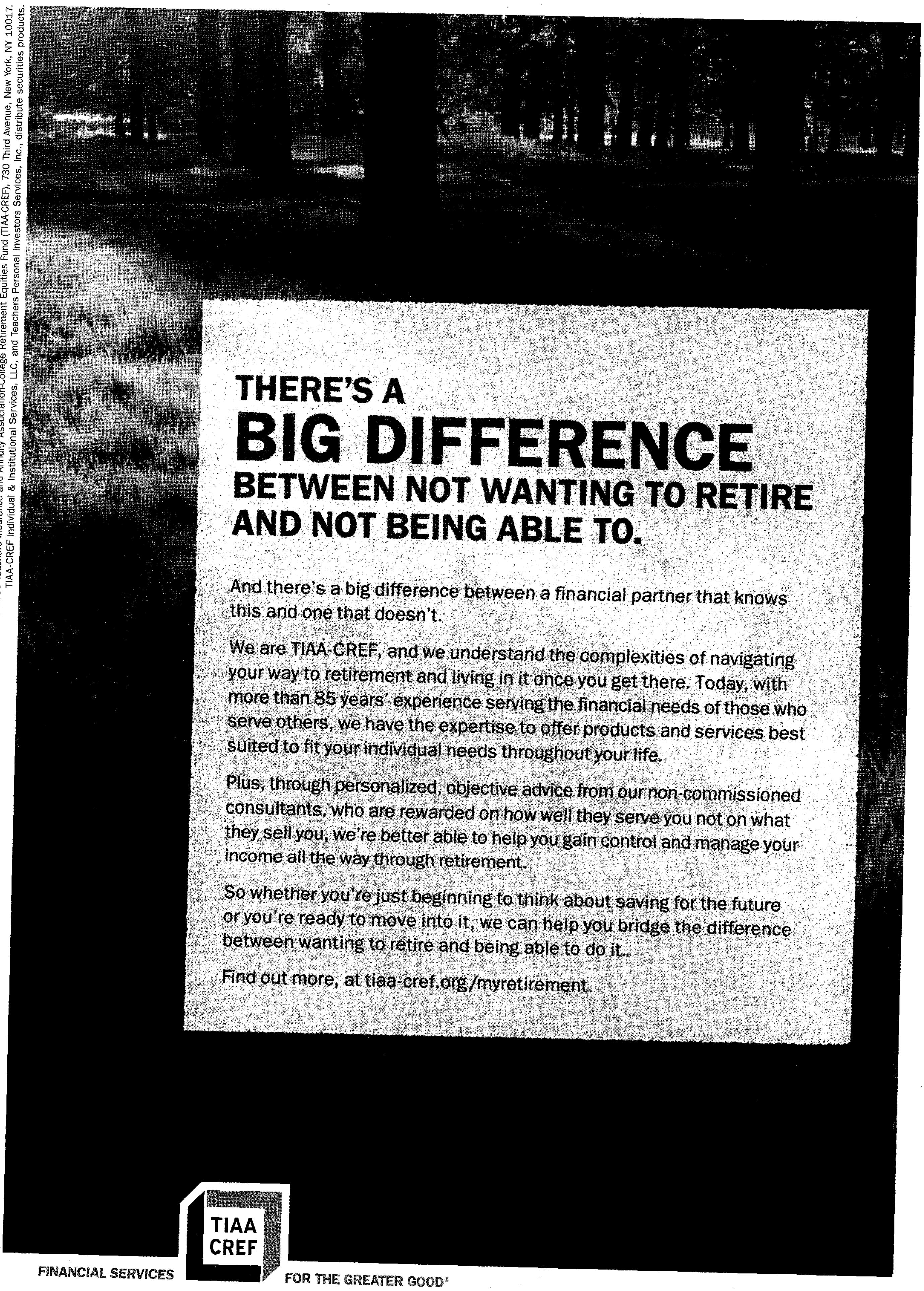
"White on White (and a Little Gray)," an examination of the effects that can be derived using a minimalist grisaille palette, is the second monochromatic show at the American Folk Art Museum in recent years; fans of last winter's "Blue" may enjoy this new take on a familiar theme. (See page 17.)

MOVIES
OPEN TO THE WORLD

The director Lee Man-hee, who died in 1975, at age forty-three, brought the themes and styles of Western modernist filmmaking to South Korea. Some of his fifty films were catastrophic flops, others were victims of censorship, and "Late Autumn," which some consider his masterwork, has simply vanished. Four films by Lee are the centerpiece of BAM's Korean Film Festival. (See page 32.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
CARNIVAL!

Sparkling costumes and lively calypso, soca, and reggae rhythms are the order of the day as the West Indian American Day Parade makes its way down Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway. (See page 34.)



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FALL CULTURAL CALENDAR

September

Michigan State University • East Lansing

Audra McDonald

September 15th, 8 P.M. • whartoncenter.com

Soprano and four-time Tony Award-winning actor Audra McDonald, whose talent leads her to reinterpret classical and popular songs, a well-known aria, or even her own work, will be a shoo-in to enrapture the Wharton Center audience.

The George Washington University • Washington, D.C.

Pink Martini

September 21st, 8 P.M. • lisner.org

Pink Martini founder and pianist Thomas M. Lauderdale contends that his twelve-piece "little orchestra" is made up of musical archeologists who excavate melodic and rhythmic artifacts from around the world. Their urban musical travelogue leaps over geographical and genre boundaries with a swirl of sound that conveys what Lauderdale calls "Mary Poppins meets the United Nations."

University of Chicago • Chicago

"Raisin"

September 23rd–October 22nd, 8 P.M. • courttheatre.uchicago.edu

Charles Newell puts his signature touch on the Tony Award-winning musical "Raisin," adapted in 1973 from Lorraine Hansberry's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "A Raisin in the Sun." As Newell has done with previous revivals, he promises to put the production into a contemporary setting.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"The End of Cinematics"

September 28th, 7:30 P.M.; September 29th, 8 P.M. • carolinaperformingarts.org

Composer and director Mikel Rouse boasts a résumé of adventurous projects where high art converges with popular culture, from avant-rock bands to multimedia opera. For his latest effort, Rouse delivers a high-tech experience featuring multiple screens, wraparound sound, and live video.

University of California, Berkeley

"King Arthur" by Henry Purcell

Mark Morris Dance Group and Philharmonic Baroque Orchestra

September 30th; October 3rd, 5th, 6th & 7th 8 P.M. • calperfs.berkeley.edu

A longtime Bay-Area favorite, choreographer Mark Morris returns to the stage with "King Arthur." For his new work, Morris goes back to his frequent sources of inspiration: opera and Baroque music. In so doing, he offers dance and opera enthusiasts alike a chance to rediscover Henry Purcell's richly lyrical work in this American première.

October

University of Pennsylvania • Philadelphia

The Drummers of Burundi

October 1st, 3 P.M. • pennpresents.org

Expect booming drums, rhythmic fireworks, and flaming footwork when this ensemble rumbles into Philadelphia. Tracing its sacred and ritual origins back hundreds of years, the group hails from central Africa and has wowed audiences around the world, from when they once collaborated with Joni Mitchell to when they opened for The Clash.

University of California, Los Angeles

The Moth Story Tour

October 12th, 8 P.M. • uclalive.org

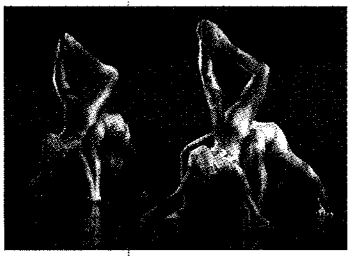
The Moth, a New York-storytelling phenomenon, has been the sensation of literary aficionados since 1997. Actors, writers, pop stars, and lesser-known but equally engaging folks mesmerize audiences with unscripted tales. For its L.A. première, The Moth Story Tour will feature raconteurs, well-known writers, and surprise celebrity guests.

University of Washington • Seattle

Momix

October 19th–21st, 8 P.M. • uwworldseries.org

Mix classical ballet, modern dance, and gymnastics with humor, lights, and shadows, and you've got Momix, a troupe of dancers and theatre illusionists who conjure up the surreal. The legacy continues with "Opus Cactus," a new suite of twenty-one dances sporting an American Southwest theme, set to music that ranges from Bach to Brian Eno.



Columbia University • New York

Composer Portraits Series with John Zorn

October 26th, 8 P.M. • millertheatre.com

Iconoclastic alto saxophonist John Zorn flies in the face of jazz convention as he merges genres from classical to klezmer to death metal. The Composer Portraits Series will feature Zorn's eclectic works performed by all-star ensembles selected by Zorn. The program includes four world premières, one written by Mike Patton, former lead singer of the pop band Faith No More.

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

FOGGY BOTTOM
The world première of a political comedy by James Armstrong, about a government bureaucrat who becomes illicitly involved with three attractive young illegal aliens. Previews begin Sept. 2. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING
The actor and mime Bill Bowers stars in this one-man show, an autobiographical review of his life so far and a study of the role silence plays in it. Martha Banta directs. Previews begin Aug. 30. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

NEW YORK CLOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
This festival showcases a roster of clown acts, panel discussions ("Why I Hate Clowns"), and workshops. Highlights include Chiche Capon's Cabaret, from Paris, and Eric Davis as Red Bastard. Opens Sept. 1. (Brick Theatre, 575 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn. 212-352-3101.)

THE PAIN AND THE ITCH
Playwrights Horizons opens its season with a new comedy by Bruce Norris, a satire of a self-conscious liberal family. Anna D. Shapiro directs. Previews begin Sept. 1. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE TREATMENT
Dylan McDermott and Portia star in the world première of a new play by Eve Ensler ("The Vagina Monologues"), about a traumatized soldier and his female psychologist. The play kicks off the Impact Festival at the Culture Project. Leigh Silverman directs. In previews. (45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSINTHE
Spiegeltent (or "tent of mirrors"), the odd and remarkable venue that has materialized at the former site of the Fulton Fish Market, has its ideal headlining event in this sexy circus for adults. Not only are the performers virtuosic, most of them also have a naughty streak, and some of them wear very little clothing. The show's motley program, which includes a debauched scissor swallower and a woman who makes handkerchiefs appear from the most provocative places, proves that sideshow stunts can be just as eye-popping writ small as they are under the big top. If you've been thinking of running away to join the circus, go with this one. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 212-279-4200.)

BRUTALITY OF FACT
Stephanie Yankwitt directs a revival of Keith Reddin's black comedy about the decline of a troubled family, featuring Joy Franz. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

CREATION: A CLOWN SHOW
Lucas Caleb Rooney has a face like Fred Flintstone's, but with a big red nose. In his one-man show, he displays not only a gift for rubbery physical mimicry—watch him become a hen hatching chicks, or Captain Ahab chasing Moby-Dick—but also the pure joy of a kid in a sandbox making a very messy mud pie. In the show (directed by Orlando Pabotoy and aided by two deadpan musicians), Rooney is called upon by a disembodied voice reading from Genesis to become the Biblical God of creation: to find a way to separate darkness from light, to create land, sea, and heaven. He does this with whatever props are at hand—including a water bottle, potting soil, and raw eggs—and exudes a wonderful conviction that his messy mud pie is, in fact, our heaven and earth. Rooney works hard to convince us that he's a simpleton, but his creations are genuinely funny and surprising. (Theatre Five, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-868-4444.)

THE DEATH IN THE JUNIPER GROVE
Three former classmates return to the site of a friend's death, in this drama written and directed by Le Wilhelm. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Sept. 3.)

THE FANTASTICKS
After a four-year hiatus, the long-running musical fable returns, relatively unchanged and still dewy as the dawn, under the direction of Tom Jones, who wrote the lyrics to Harvey Schmidt's music and who memorably reprises the role of Henry, a senile actor for hire. Despite the move from its original home, the Sullivan Street Playhouse, to the considerably less homey-sounding Snapple Theatre Center, the show hasn't lost its appeal; it feels like a game of make-believe performed in a grandmother's attic. Even so, its moments of preciousness are surprisingly few. "The Fantasticks" is just like the kind of teen-age love it depicts: nectar-sweet, exempt from time, and not nearly as simple as you may remember it. (210 W. 50th St. 212-307-4100.)

HENRIK IBSEN + JON FOSSE: NORWAY MEETS NEW YORK
Oslo Elsewhere presents English translations of "Rosmersholm," by Ibsen, and "Deathvariations," by Fosse. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

INDIAN BLOOD
A. R. Gurney's semiautobiographical drama, presented by Primary Stages, takes place in wintry nineteen-forties Buffalo, where Gurney's teen-age alter ego, Eddie (Charles Socarides), is caught doodling a dirty picture in Latin class and blames his bad behavior on a trace of Native American ancestry. Without pressing any thematic buttons too hard, Gurney creates out of this incident a warm reminiscence that is equal parts affectionate and subversive. In an explicit homage to Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," the set is bare-bones—it calls to mind a disintegrating old photograph—but the space left by the lack of furniture is more than compensated for by the funny and nuanced characters in Eddie's Wasp family. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Sept. 2.)

KIKI & HERB: ALIVE ON BROADWAY
As Kiki, the ancient lounge singer with a potty mouth and a rather philosophical view of the world, Justin Bond gives this show everything he's got, which is a great deal. By turns solipsistic and spot on as a social reporter, Bond's Kiki sings—in an ear-ringing growl—tunes that emphasize what she means to say, especially when she's in her cups. Backed on the piano and in life by the sweet-faced, even-tempered Herb (the adorable Kenny Mellman), Kiki covers a lot of ground in this show, including President Bush, homosexual rights, and Jesus and the manger. Bond and Mellman, who wrote and directed the project, could have benefitted from a little outside direction, if only to cut certain of the script's redundancies. Mostly, though, we're happy to spend time with this odd couple, who would hurt themselves with booze and delusions before they'd hurt a fly. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARTIN SHORT: FAME BECOMES ME
The consummate comedian-performer, Short glides effortlessly through his latest Broadway incarnation, an arch sendup of theatrical egotism. Packed full of jokes, sketches, and impersonations, this mock-autobiography features original songs by Marc Shaiman (who also makes several cherubic appearances) and Scott Wittman (who also directs) and supporting turns by four game, talented performers. High points include a "Wizard of Oz" takeoff with Dorothy (Mary Birdsong) lamenting the salesman who got away and Short as an emotionally supportive fence, and Short's Jiminy Glick bit, in which he brilliantly improvises an interview with a wild-card audience member. Even though the story loses its way toward the end, Short delivers a big finish, returning to knowingly, disarmingly beg the audience to show him the love he craves. It works. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MR. DOOLEY'S AMERICA
At the turn of the century, a Chicago newspaper editor named Finley Peter Dunne (played by Des Keogh) created a larger-than-life character to anchor his anonymous columns—the Irish saloonkeeper and philosopher of the shot glass Dooley, whose homespun jeremiads about American democracy eventually won legions of readers. Here, Dooley is charmingly brought to life by the Dublin actor Vincent Dowling, whose shrewdness and humanity give substance to the talky role. Set in a pub with sawdust on the floor and plenty of whiskey in the well, the play—created by the columnist's son Philip Dunne, along with Martin Blaine—puts Dooley head to head with a quiet codger named Hennessy, turning their chat into an appealing slice of Irish immigrant life. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN
Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline star in Bertolt Brecht's tale about a matriarch who loses several children to an ongoing war. This season's final Shakespeare in the Park production features a new translation by Tony Kushner, with original songs by Jeanine Tesori. Directed by George C. Wolfe. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750. Through Sept. 3.)

SEVEN GUITARS
The first of three August Wilson plays to be produced by the Signature Theatre Company follows seven people struggling in Pittsburgh's Hill District in the late forties. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

SWEENEY TODD
Under the bold direction and design of John Doyle, this imported British revival, at the Eugene O'Neill, which shrinks the cast of thirty to ten, with actors doubling as musicians, is almost unbearably exciting. With eight chairs, a coffin, and a ladder, Doyle conjures up a universe of woe and wonder; the actors are not just characters and musicians—they are also the scenery. Sweeney (Michael Cerveris), who was transported to Australia for fifteen years on a trumped-up charge by a judge who lusted after his wife, returns to London in disguise to find his wife apparently dead and his beloved daughter (Lauren Molina) the ward of the very judge who sent him away. Cerveris is a terrifying Sweeney, a model of sulfurous restraint. Patti LuPone, as his pragmatic and pathological helpmate, Mrs. Lovett, is a gargoyle of toughness, and positively Weimar. As life and theatre have taught us, there is no escape from the power of the perverse. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/14/05.) (230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. Through Sept. 3.)

OUT OF TOWN

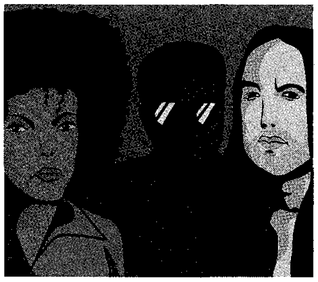
BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Wendy Wasserstein's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "The Heidi Chronicles," continues its run through Sept. 2. (Stockbridge, Mass. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Gia Forakis directs "The Rivals," through Sept. 2, and Terrence O'Brien directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream," through Sept. 3. (Garrison, N.Y. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 220 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . .:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **PIG FARM:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. Through Sept. 3. **[TITLE OF SHOW]:** Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-279-4200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
OFF TO THE RACES



During a recent Earl Greyhound show, one audience member turned to another and said, "Why aren't they signed to a major yet?" "They're still playing," his friend quipped. Whether or not Earl Greyhound are the Next Big Thing is irrelevant—watching them will convince you that they are. The band's immediate reference point is Led Zeppelin, which is common enough to be almost meaningless, except that Earl Greyhound could actually pull off opening for the masters. The guitarist and singer Matt Whyte was designed for a life in rock: tall, lanky, wearing his hair long and his Les Paul guitar low. In the band's best song, "S.O.S.," Whyte crunches along on his guitar, but in the moments that directly summon Robert Plant, the bassist, Kamara Thomas—a beautiful woman with a big Afro—steps up to the mike and unleashes a voice that blots out the bandleader's. And Ricc Sheridan is the most exciting drummer in New York. His arms are as big as fire hydrants, his timekeeping is implacable, and the force of his playing would make any reasonable drummer cry. The band performs in Brooklyn on Sept. 16 at the Hook.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—At the dawn of the twentieth century, Mother Mary Magdalena L. Tate, an African-American preacher, started a new Pentecostal church called the House of God, Which Is the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth Without Controversy. As the church spread, it was helped by a persuasive new art form, "sacred steel," the use of pedal steel guitars in the worship service. The House of God, as the church is commonly known, became a fertile, if somewhat obscure, ground for talented players. Recently, however, the music has spread into the secular realm. A few years ago, the young church guitarist Robert Randolph crossed over and achieved renown among jam-band and blues fans. The **Campbell Brothers**, who regularly play services upstate, in Rush, New York, have been at it a few decades longer; they gave Randolph his first guitar. They're here Aug. 30, with the **Lee Boys**, from Florida. Sept. 1: "Blues Harp Blowout." **Mark Hummel** came of age in the early seventies, at the height of rock and roll, but instead of picking up a guitar, like most of his peers, he went out and bought a harmonica, and he hasn't stopped playing since. A specialist in the West Coast blues, he's a seasoned showman who knows more than a thing or two about how to please an audience. He's the driving force behind this show, which also features **Jerry Portnoy**, who's played with Muddy Waters, Pinetop Perkins, and Eric Clapton; **Magic Dick**, J. Geils's sidekick; and **Lee Oskar**, a founding member of the band War. Sept. 2: The beloved late-eighties N.Y.C. hardcore outfit **Gorilla Biscuits** laces up its boots for a stomp down memory lane.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Sept. 5: **Ratatat**, a local electronica and guitar duo that specializes in danceable instrumentals, has just released its second album, "Classics."

EUROPA NIGHT CLUB
98-104 Meserole Ave., at Manhattan Ave. Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-383-5723)—Sept. 2: **Shellac** is an abrasive trio from Chicago fronted by Steve Albini, the notoriously thorny legend of the American indie underground known for his work with the Pixies and Nirvana. Specializing in high volumes, discordant blasts of staccato guitars, and lyrics that many would find offensive, Shellac is truly an acquired taste.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 30: The **Magic Numbers** are a sunny act made up of two brother-and-sister pairs. They favor rootsy, classic pop, and they are sweetly oblivious of fashion; their harmony-laden melodies and hippie aesthetic have garnered comparisons to the Mamas and the Papas. Sept. 5: **Tony Joe White**, the swamp-rocking pen behind "Polk Salad Annie," "Rainy Night in Georgia," and other hits, has a new album, "Uncovered."

JONES BEACH
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—Sept. 2: A few weeks ago, only a handful of dates into the "Family Values" tour, a concertgoer in Atlanta was savagely beaten by inebriated fans, reportedly after he asked them to be mindful of his pregnant girlfriend. He later died from his injuries, and though this inauspicious event has cast a pall over the proceedings, the touring festival rolls on, headlined by the dreadlocked and angst-filled band **Korn** and featuring the **Deftones**, **Stone Sour**, **Flyleaf**, and **Dir En Grey**.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Aug. 30: The Cuban guitarist and singer **Juan-Carlos Formell** doesn't rest on the glory of his family's heritage. The son of Los Van Van's leader, Juan Formell (and the grandson of the legendary arranger Francisco Formell), Juan-Carlos moved to New York more than a decade ago, reinvigorating traditional Cuban music with unsurpassed passion. He's here celebrating the release of his new album, "*Son* Radical." Monday nights: **Jim Campilongo** holds court. American music is a melting pot of influences, but few guitarists capture the nuances as well as Campilongo, who lays down country licks next to blues lines and jazz riffs with steady virtuosity.

NEW YORK BURLESQUE FESTIVAL
Now in its fourth year, this gathering of traditional striptease performers, risqué dance troupes, and raucous bands spreads the action out over three days. It opens on Sept. 1 with a party populated by go-go dancers and sideshow acts at a new Brooklyn club called Studio B (259 Banker St.) and closes, on Sept. 3, with a cruise around Manhattan aboard the Queen of Hearts Showboat featuring the Golden Pastie Awards. The "Saturday Spectacular," at the Supper Club (240 W. 47th St.), falls in between, and promises uninhibited performers from around the globe. (For more information, visit www.thenewyorkburlesquefestival.com.)

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Sept. 3: **Acid Mothers Temple**, an eccentric psychedelic collective from Japan, boldly experiments with sprawling, spacey fare. Its expansive compositions often risk turning into bad trips, but that hasn't stopped it from developing a cult audience here.

RUMSEY PLAYFIELD
Central Park, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-307-7171)—Sept. 5-6: The easy grooves of **Ben Harper and the Innocent Criminals**. With the reggae scion **Damian (Jr. Gong) Marley**.

SPIEGELTENT
Pier 17, South Street Seaport (212-279-4200)—Aug. 30: The **Ditty Bops** are two women from Los Angeles (Abby DeWald and Amanda Barrett) who, perhaps more than other musicians, are willing to sweat their way to the top: the pair have been riding their bikes on a cross-country tour since May, dodging stray dogs and enduring the summer heat (their instruments—guitar, mandolin, washboard, etc.—and other gear—including a trunk of homemade costumes—are being carted in a bio-diesel van). Their cabaret-lite songs eschew contemporary beats for a happy-days-are-here-again feeling. Sept. 1-3: The **Asylum Street Spankers**, a free-spirited collective of acoustic-blues-loving musicians out of Austin, Texas.

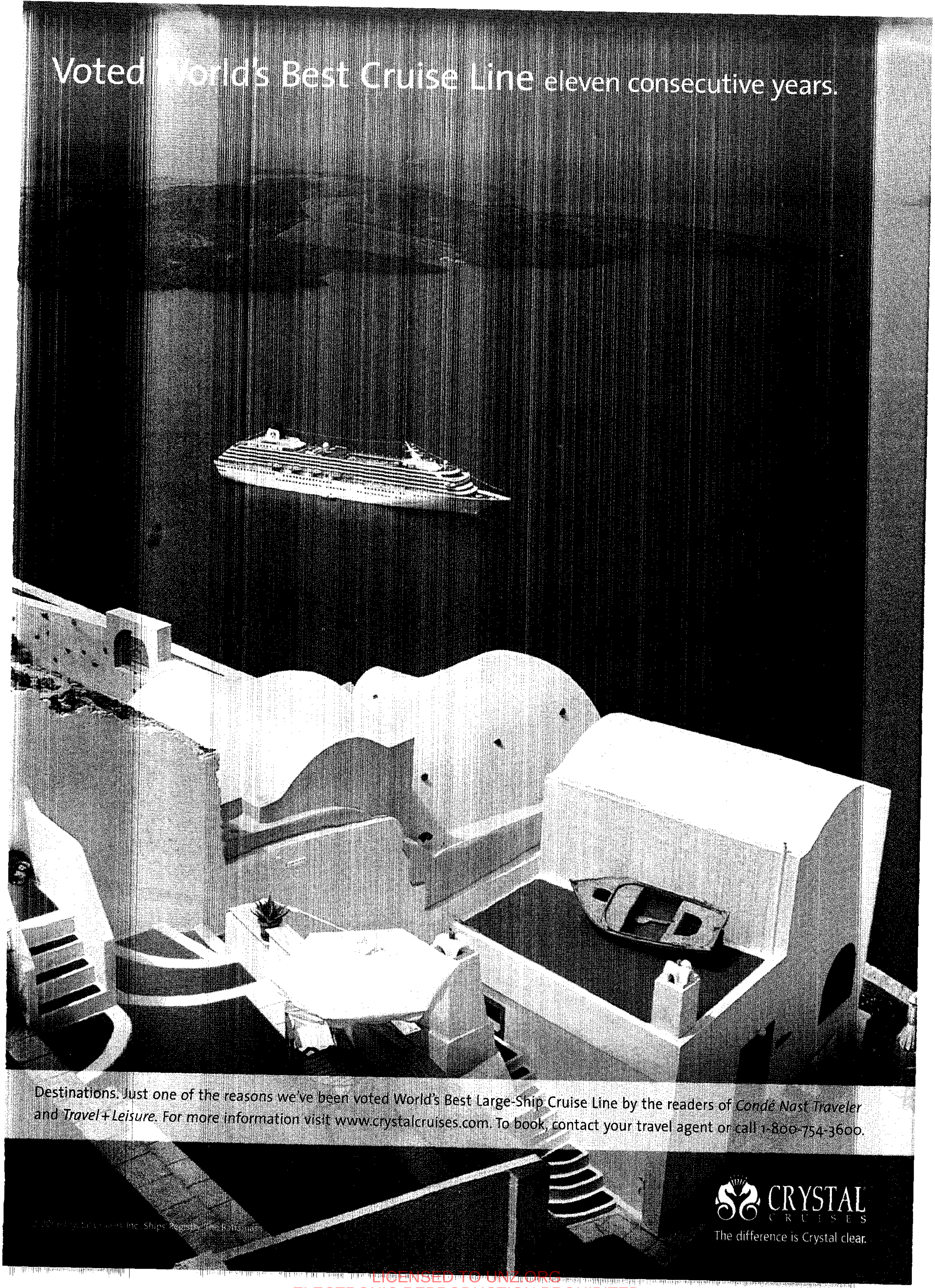
TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Aug. 31: **Spielerfrau**, a literate New York quartet led by the Soviet émigré, former television-news anchor, journalist, and singer-songwriter Michael Idov, plays understated, sophisticated rock with melancholy lyrics and reverb-drenched guitar. With **Martin Bisi**, the legendary New York engineer and producer. Bisi, who's worked with everyone from Sonic Youth to Herbie Hancock, takes a break from the studio to perform material from a forthcoming album of funny, occasionally bitter unrequited-love songs, backed by a new band that knows how to restrain itself beneath his wild guitar lines and idiosyncratic vocals.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 30-Sept. 2: The pianist **Richie Beirach** leads a trio featuring the bassist **George Mraz** and the drummer **Billy Hart**. The violinist **Gregor Huebner**, with whom Beirach and Mraz recorded the album "Round About Monteverdi," a 2003 sleeper of considerable beauty, will join them.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Aug. 31-Sept. 3: The **Avishai Cohen** quartet. Cohen, a transplanted Israeli, has a natural pas-

MAXIMILIAN BODE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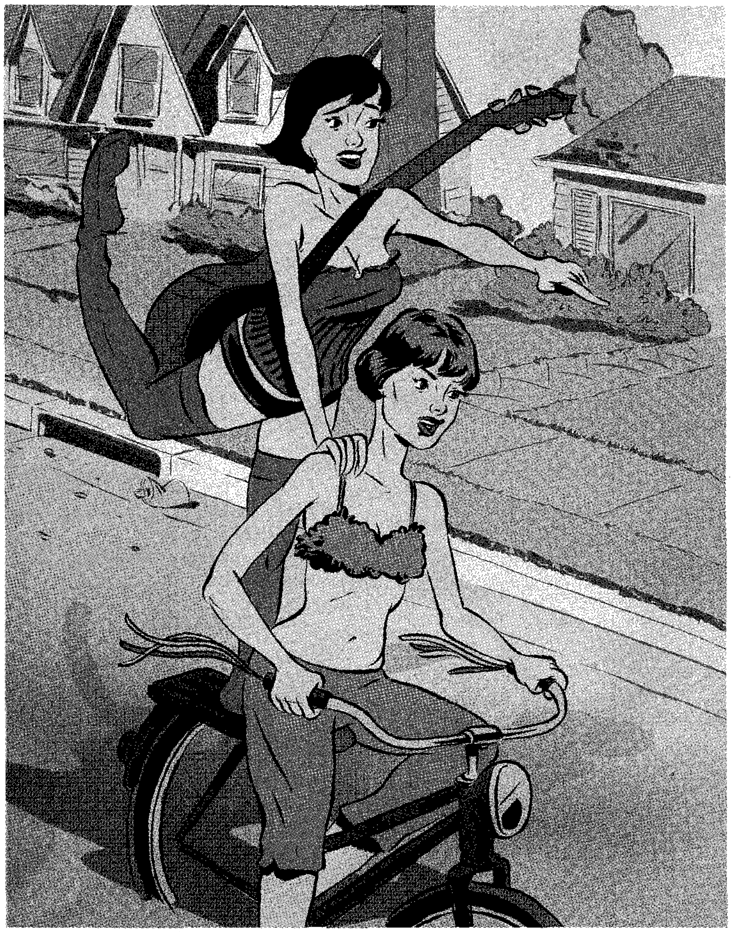
sion for Middle Eastern music. Best known for his work with Chick Corea, this gifted bassist successfully blends native idioms with jazz.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Aug. 29-Sept. 3: Paying homage to an early employer, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the trombonist and seashell virtuoso **Steve Turre** stops by with a septet that includes the saxophonists **Billy Harper,** on tenor, and **Vincent Herring,** on alto. If the astonishing Kirk were still with us, he could have played both horns simultaneously. Sept. 4-5: The vocalist **René Marie** kicks off the second annual Women in Jazz Festival.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 31-Sept. 3: The **Denny Zeitlin** trio. A pianist's pianist, and a longtime psychiatrist to boot, Zeitlin is fondly remembered for his occasional engagements, stretching back to the sixties, with the bassist Charlie Haden, and for writing "Quiet Now," a gorgeous ballad that Bill Evans turned into a standard. A resident of the West Coast, Zeitlin is too little heard in these parts. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.



The Ditty Bops roll into town for a show at the Spiegeltent.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 29-30: **Winard Harper,** one of the most versatile drummers in jazz, fronts a sextet. Aug. 31: If funky jazz of the sixties and seventies is your thing, the name **Melvin Sparks** will ring plenty of bells. This soulful guitarist brings decades of experience and a trunk load of tried-and-true licks to the bandstand.

"JAMMIN' ON THE HUDSON"
Sept. 4: **Wallace Roney** brings his Miles Davis-inflected trumpet to Riverbank State Park. (Riverside Dr. at 145th St. 212-694-3633. Sept. 4.)

KITANO
Park Ave. at 38th St. (212-885-7022)—The formidable vibraphonist **Joe Locke** settles in Sept. 1-2.

MERKIN CONCERT HALL
129 W. 67th St. (212-501-3330)—Sept. 2: New Orleans comes to New York when the pianist **Henry Butler** (performing solo) and the clarinettist **Dr. Michael White's** traditional jazz quartet kick off the fall season of the "Chamber Jazz" series.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Aug. 29-Sept. 3: **Al Foster,** an esteemed drummer, has brought rhythmic sparkle to the bands of Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and Joe Henderson, among many others. Here he's joined by the Israeli saxophonist **Eli Degibri,** the pianist **Kevin Hays,** and the bassist **Doug Weiss.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece."** There's an exciting lurch in the style of Raphael's "Colonna Madonna" (1504-05), an altarpiece whose long-dispersed parts, most belonging to the Met, have been reconvened, along with related works by others and documentation of its star-dusted provenance (including Francis I, of France, and J. P. Morgan). Raphael turned twenty-one while painting Mary and the baby Jesus on an outdoor throne, attended by a toddler John the Baptist and four saints, with a lunette of God the Father and a predella of scenes from the Passion. The decorous manner of an early influence, Perugino, abruptly gives way, in the male saints, to rugged cues from Michelangelo. The High Renaissance has begun. Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"On Photography: A Tribute to Susan Sontag."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Treasures of Sacred Maya Kings."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** This summer, the roof garden is home to four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them is "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Rembrandt and His Circle: Drawings and Prints."** Through Oct. 15. ♦ **"AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"The Fabric of Life: Ikat Textiles of Indonesia."** The word "ikat" derives from a verb meaning "to tie," and the ancient textile art is surely the most exacting form of tie-dye ever invented. Each island in the Indonesian archipelago has its own traditions, but all involve an intensive process whereby the woven fabric's warp and weft are dyed separately, so that a pattern—tight chevrons, complex medallions, interlocking stripes—emerges only on the loom. The panels displayed include shawls, hip cloths, and other wearable articles, along with coverlets, tapestries, and divination cloths dense with glyphic designs. The palette is sombre and delicious, ranging from dark blood red to chocolate brown and indigo. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Dada,"** a large and illuminating survey of the anti-art movement. Through Sept. 11. ♦ **"Douglas Gordon: Timeline."** One could spend hours in this mini-retrospective—or just minutes. View the works as objects, and they can be apprehended almost instantly; take them as film, and it seems strange that no seating—or popcorn—is provided in the galleries. Basically, this show is about turning movies into sculptures. Gordon is famous for having slowed Hitchcock's "Psycho" down to a twenty-four-hour loop projected on a double-sided screen. He also juxtaposes "The Exorcist" with "The Song of Bernadette" and creates a convincingly erotic blue movie using nothing more than a closeup of his own two hands. Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Artist's Choice: Herzog & de Meuron, Perception Restrained."** The Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron have built what they call a "perception machine" to view objects culled from the permanent collection. Through Sept. 25. ♦ There are some heavy hitters in **"Since 2000: Printmaking Now"**—Richard Tuttle, William Kentridge, Andrea Zittel, Matthew Barney—but the show belongs to young artists playing fast and loose with the adaptable but labor-intensive, somewhere-between-mechanical-and-handmade idea of the print. Kelley Walker lays bright tangles of ink onto black-and-white nineteen-seventies ads for turntables, as if the colors were music. Paul Chan borrows from Goya and Beckett. Swoon prints nearly life-size portraits on thin panels of cutout plastic applied directly to the wall. And Nicola López papers a corner with overlaid sheets depicting an urban hallucination of clouds, tires, chains, and oil derricks. Through Sept. 18. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper."** Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid."** The only Pritzker Prize-winning architect to be compared consistently to an opera singer—O.K., *diva*—takes over the ramps in Wright's rotunda. The installation mirrors Hadid's career, which has often emphasized artistic conceptualizing and imaginary or virtual space over actual construction. Constructivist- and Suprematist-inspired paintings, crafted in lieu of elevations and axonometric plans, serve as "testing fields." It's easy to get lost in their weightless spatial geometries and think, This is architecture? Only after a long trudge up the spiral does one enter the material world of Perspex and foam-core models and photographs of completed buildings, like the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, in Cincinnati. Hadid's ascension is complete at the top of the ramp, where we see that she has received the contemporary architect's ultimate reward: designing flatware, chandeliers, tea services, and futuristic kitchen models. Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Full House,"** the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary extravaganza, includes a floor entirely devoted to the works of Edward Hopper. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Old-fashioned museological Egyptology meets state-of-the-art, user-friendly installation in the permanent exhibition **"Egypt Reborn."** The sunny, spacious galleries present thousands of objects, tracing an evolution from the pre-dynastic period in 3500

ZOHAR LAZAR

B.C. to the era of Roman influence. Wonders include a lavishly painted cartonnage with matching interior coffin lid, a frog-shaped childbirth amulet in brilliant blue faience, and a mummified crocodile from the crocodile cemetery at Kahun. An almost infinite listing of favorites is possible—just don't miss the bird-headed terra-cotta figure thought to be a fertility goddess, one of the oldest, most renowned, and most beautiful artifacts in the world. ♦ A new section of the exhibition, a set of thirty old and rare books assembled under the heading **"Egypt Through Other Eyes,"** documents Western fascination with ancient Egypt over the last couple of centuries. Through Nov. 12. ♦ **"Graffiti."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Lizards & Snakes Alive!"** Through Jan. 7. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"White on White (and a Little Gray)."** The trickle-down effect of neoclassicism, the antiquity-embracing style that accompanied the French Revolution and Napoleon's regime, can be seen here in American crafts and decorative arts: "whitework" bedspreads in domestic cotton and flax, which served as fields for white decorative flourishes; weathervanes in the shapes of horses and angels; and works created by the nineteenth-century version of Etch-a-Sketch, a homespun method of scratching pictures in lampblack on panels treated with marble dust. Subjects for this last endeavor include not only scenes of ancient Greece and Rome but also more contemporary settings, such as Washington's headquarters at Morristown and the Delaware Water Gap, along with some moody, Romantic depictions of graveyards and storms. Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Concrete Kingdom: Sculptures by Nek Chand."** Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and until 7:30 on Fridays.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—Photographs accompanying **"A Passion for Asia: The Rockefeller Family Collects"** show various Rockefeller manses tricked out with Asian booty, and the images register as alarmingly Orientalist at first glance. Then, however, there are the objects themselves—near-priceless metalwork, statuary, textiles, ceramics, manuscripts, screens, scrolls, and costumes—which are tastefully installed in dimly lit, creamily colored galleries that accentuate their beauty, craft, and opulence. Chinese and Japanese vessels, Persian and Indian manuscripts—even a Noguchi sculpture—vie for attention on one floor, while religious works, from Chinese, Nepalese, and Indian bodhisattvas and gods to a simple wooden cross by the American modernist George Nakashima, occupy another. Ultimately, the quality of this collection demonstrates the Rockefellers' passion for, and commitment to, Asian art, which drove them to found this institution, in 1956. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—"Scenic tourism" boomed in the later nineteenth century, as a rapidly enlarging middle class—assisted by similarly expanding railroads—amassed the wealth and acquired the taste to travel far and wide to admire nature. **"Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape"** tracks the contributions of the three painters in fomenting appreciation for a variety of wonder sights: Niagara Falls, the Maine coast, Yellowstone, Yosemite. Church's beautiful, proto-photographic gouaches and sketches in colored pencil lead the way, but the collection also boasts stereo slides, souvenir dishes, and the guest book of the Catskill Mountain House, filled with brown-ink signatures heavy with Victorian flourishes. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005."** Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt."** Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702-89): Swiss Master."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Italia! Muse to American Artists"** is a modest show with a massive subject: Italy's influence on American artists since 1830. Academic views of cities and landscapes dominate, like Thomas Moran's 1884 etching "The Gate of Venice," but sketchbooks, bits of ephemera, and oddball works take the exhibition on some unlikely detours. An old Baedeker guide commemorates the advent of mass tourism; John Ross's "Visible Cities" print series riffs off Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities," in which Marco Polo tells Kublai Khan about the splendors of various cities (all of which turn out to be descriptions of Venice, his home town). And unlike Florence, Rome, or any other site on the grand tour in summer—or next door at the Guggenheim, for that matter—the place won't be too crowded with visitors. Through Dec. 31. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Gustav Klimt: Five Paintings from the Collection of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer"** includes the 1907 gold-and-silver-laced portrait of Adele, which will be joining the Neue Galerie's permanent collection. Through Sept. 18. (Open Thursdays and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Legacies: Contemporary Artists Reflect on Slavery."** The museum's first foray into contemporary art explores an ignoble history. The artists represented include Betye Saar, Carrie Mae Weems, Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, and Fred Wilson. Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

NOGUCHI MUSEUM
9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—**"Best of Friends: R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi."** Through Oct. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Time Frame."** Time wasn't much of an issue for visual artists until film, video, and performance came along. Andy Warhol's "Sleep" (1963), a three-hundred-and-twenty-one-minute film of the poet John Giorno snoring away (whittled down here to a snappy forty-two minutes), serves as a touchstone. John Pilson's twenty-four-minute "Dark Empire" pays homage to another Warhol film, the eight-hour-plus "Empire," while younger artists such as Cory Arcangel push the genre farther with a thirty-three-day-long version of Dennis Hopper's 1988 film, "Colors." Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographs of theatre screens, exposed for the duration of a film, are characteristically controlled and elegant. Paul Pfeiffer's camera-tipsy sunset offers a surprisingly new way to view an exhausted subject. Roni Horn's minimalist glass blocks aren't really apropos, but so much of her work is about time that she seems to have earned a bye. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"John Lurie: Works on Paper."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Into Me/Out of Me."** A hundred and thirty artists—including Kiki Smith, Ugo Rondinone, Pipilotti Rist, and Robert Gober—ponder the boundaries of bodies. Through

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Sept. 25. ♦ **"Ron Gorchov: Double Trouble."** Through Sept. 18. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

QUEEN SOFÍA SPANISH INSTITUTE

684 Park Ave., at 68th St. (212-628-0420)—**"Ràfols-Casamada Paintings 1950-2005."** Through Sept. 29. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—Tantric Buddhism is an ancient spiritual practice inspired by the "crazy wisdom" of ascetic Siddhas, those renegade monks and (less frequently) nuns who are described politely as enlightened nonconformists and bluntly as degenerate misfits. **"Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas"** presents these colorful characters in paintings, mandalas, and statues, mostly from Tibet. It does one good to contemplate them. Virupa, "the Ugly One," is famous for having stopped the sun in the sky to avoid paying his bar tab. Tilopa was a pimp, but also the founder of a revered lineage of teachers. Chandragomin, "the Grammarian," was said to bring divine images to life by talking to them. Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Take to the Sky: Flying Mystics in Himalayan Art."** Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"Perfected Beings, Pure Realms."** Through Sept. 1. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, 11 to 5, Wednesdays, 11 to 7, Fridays, 11 to 10, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM

12 Fulton St., at Water St. (212-748-8600)—The life of Eugeen Van Mieghem (1875-1930) coincided with the busiest years of the Red Star shipping line, and his parents owned an inn in Antwerp near the firm's warehouses. As an artist, he was thus uniquely placed to observe the Eastern Europeans who thronged to the Belgian quays on their way to Ellis Island and beyond. **"Antwerp = America: Eugeen Van Mieghem and the Emigrants of the Red Star Line"** showcases Van Mieghem's sombre, smoky paintings, enlivened here and there with a red cap or a babushka. There are also artifacts from the ships' cabins, advertising posters, and photographs of both fin-de-siècle Antwerp and shipboard life, including a young Albert Einstein in a deck chair and a motion-blurred shot of kids playing ring-around-the-rosy. Through Oct. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—Felt-covered speakers line one eleven-by-forty-five-foot wall of gallery space in a new installation by Nadine Robinson. The arcing placement of woofers and tweeters mimics the composition of saints in Michelangelo's epic "Last Judgment" fresco, but they emit a rumbling soundtrack of audio clips from horror films like "Rosemary's Baby" and "The Omen" mixed with fifteenth-century Gregorian chants. The whole thing carries an overwrought German title: **"Alles Grau in Grau Malen,"** or "everything is painted gray." All that's missing is the fog machines—there were some intended as part of the installation, but they had to be removed because they set off the museum's fire alarms. Robinson's exercise in *Gesamptkunstwerk* excess lacks any wink of irony, but it's a cogent reminder that cathedrals were originally all about bombast and spectacle and blowing viewers away with visual and aural theatrics. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Quid pro Quo."** Through Oct. 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

SARAH SZE

Those familiar with Sze's sprawling, expansive, and delicate installations might wonder how they would translate to the great outdoors, where walls don't confine her and intrepid art tourists tread freely. Sze has solved the problem cleverly by arranging her materials—a customary gathering of dime-store objects and Home Depot supplies—into a brick-and-glass structure that juts out of the sidewalk like the prow of a sunken ship. The irregular pyramid, built into the pavement, also mimics the sharp-angled architecture of a postwar building across the street, creating a visual rhyme. Sze's work generally gains its power through a sublime accretion of banal objects. Here, her impulse is also to protect and preserve, by placing her work in a bunker and letting us peer in. Through Oct. 22. (Public Art Fund, Doris C. Freedman Plaza, 60th St. at Fifth Ave. 212-980-4575.)

DORIS ULMANN

Ulmann's portraits of American farmers, preachers, fishermen, and tradespeople, many from the rural South, were made mostly in the late nineteen-twenties. August Sander was her contemporary, but her soft, post-pictorialist style was far more antique than his, and her pictures of the poor and the marginalized anticipate those of Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, who would rip away her veil of misty-eyed romanticism. But if Ulmann's work appears quaint today, it retains a passionate integrity and an undeniable beauty, particularly in these warm platinum prints. She recorded a simple and vanishing way of life with genuine respect and concern. Through Sept. 23. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 212-327-1482.)

"CLASSIC BEAUTY"

Happily, "classic" applies to only a few of the more than thirty vintage and modern photographs of the female nude assembled here. Alongside work in this refined, restrained, and somewhat mannered style by Weston, Mapplethorpe, Drtikol, and others are a number of much earthier images, most of them by the Latin-American artists who are the gallery's prime focus. The pear-shaped bodies of the women photographed by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Valdir Cruz, Antonio Reynoso, and Fritz Henle help replace the notion of classic beauty with a far more generous and erotic reality. Through Sept. 2. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.)

"LANDSCAPE IN YOUR MIND"

A sampling of contemporary works ranging from the poetic to the bodily to the cerebral. Inés Lombardi's video and photographs taken during a freighter voyage between Rotterdam and the Black Sea assume the poetic tack, depicting both misty beauty and industrial wreckage while ruminating on the fate of maritime Europe. The bodily is made explicit, formally and otherwise, in Otto Muehl's canvas of a heavily impastoed woman relieving herself in a neon-bright landscape. Heinz Greissing's perceptually challenging paintings take the cerebral approach, alternating stripes of competing landscapes in a Venetian-blind pattern. Herbert Brandl's verdant abstractions, Otto Zitko's swirling red-and-black wall mural, and Eva Schlegel's sharp-horizoned seascapes round out this show, which is much richer than its daft title suggests. Through Oct. 28. (Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300.)

"RICHARD AVEDON: EYE OF THE BEHOLDER"

Who is considered a photographer's photographer? Richard Avedon collected the work of his fellow-photographers throughout his own long and distinguished career; this show surveys his private collection, which included images by Brassaï, August Sander, Diane Arbus, Peter Hujar, Irving Penn, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Jacques-Henri Lartigue. Opens Aug. 30. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

"YES BRUCE NAUMAN"

Nauman is the art world's Thomas Pynchon or Don DeLillo: an artist-trickster besotted with language, humor, and the absurd. He's also proved immeasurably influential to younger generations. A few key Nauman works demonstrate his whip-smart cleverness, from the stretched-out letters of "My Name as Though It Were Written on the Surface of the Moon" (1967) to the happily vulgar "Bouncing Balls" video to his simultaneously menacing and silly persona in the "Clown Torture Series." Direct homage is paid in works like Francesco Vezzoli's updated "Bouncing Balls," Rirkrit Tiravanija's display of his own name in neon, and John Bock's psycho-jester videos. Like Pynchon and DeLillo, too, Nauman seems to have inspired mostly male disciples and imitators: Jessica Diamond's eponymous "Yes Bruce Nauman" text painting and a Diana Thater video are the only works here by women. Through Sept. 9. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

Short List

NANCY RUBINS: Lincoln Center, Broadway at 64th St. 212-980-4575. Through Sept. 4.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

STUART HAWKINS

Hawkins made her series of partially staged photographs—collectively titled "Customs"—in the past two years in Nepal, where she lives part time. They're accompanied by a video work, "Souvenir," in which she searches for a native who has never had an encounter with the Western world. Through Sept. 23. (Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

MICHAEL HEIZER

Eight cast-concrete objects, all made in the late eighties, enlarge a suite of Paleolithic and Neolithic stone hand tools to monumental proportions. The smooth, simple shapes bear wonderful names like "Biface Perforator," "Prismatic Flake," and "Charmstone." Heizer is right in thinking that the objects' quiet weight and brute architectonics are more apparent at large scale; their sculptural presence is formidable. Still, with their value as human tools nullified by the gigantic upsize, and their forms forced instead toward abstract "presence," the objects feel subtly misunderstood. Through Sept. 23. (PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258.)

HOWARDENA PINDELL

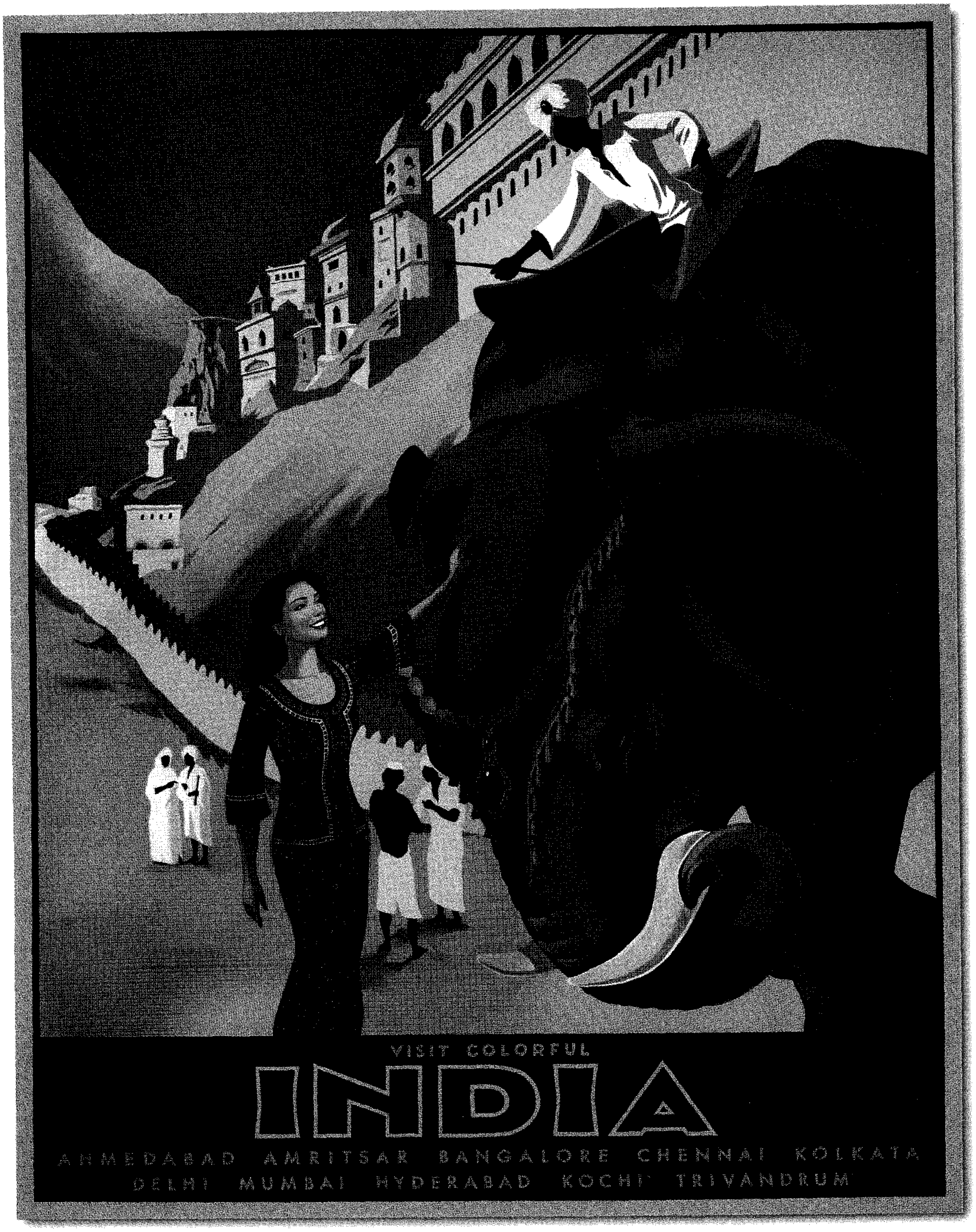
Pindell is often described as a pioneer of black abstraction (hence her inclusion in the recent "Energy/Experimentation" show, at the Studio Museum in Harlem), but this is hardly the sum of her career. Photographs and words have made their way into her paintings, and texts describing autobiographical connections and context are often posted nearby. Most important is the conundrum of abstraction as "apolitical"—devoid of objects and figures and, so the argument goes, historical and political referents—an idea that Pindell confronts head on. Even paintings made up of marks or punched-out dots of colored paper can be politically charged, if only via their titles, which in recent years have increasingly addressed AIDS, sweatshop labor, and homelessness, as well as the lingering effects of slavery. Through Aug. 31. (N'Namdi, 526 W. 26th St. 212-929-6645.)

HANS RICHTER

The death knell for Dada sounded in 1924, according to art historians, and many artists moved into Surrealism. Others, like Richter (1888-1976), a founder of Zurich Dada, never vacated the premises. In fact, he wrote one of the early comprehensive texts on the subject, "Dada: Art and Anti-Art" (1965). Richter's enduring allegiance to the anti-movement is evident in this sweeping gallery survey, where abstract geometric paintings, Arp-like wood reliefs, and charcoal drawings crafted throughout his career could all easily be dated in the teens. His most exciting contribution, however, was his films, several of which flicker on flat-screen monitors. "Rhythm 21" (1921), in particular, was among the first avant-garde films to feature abstraction, and pointed the way for later practitioners like Stan Brakhage. Through Sept. 16. (Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549.)

MARTIN SCHOELLER

Yikes! If you think that the closeup portrait photos Schoeller makes for the pages of this and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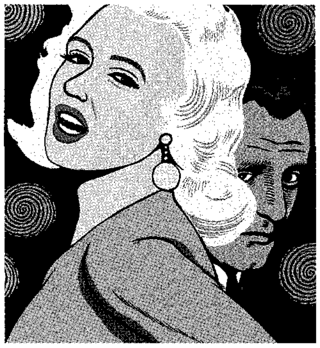


MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

From Daffy Duck to Jayne Mansfield: is that a minor adjustment, a Darwinian test case, or simply a logical step? In any event, it worked for Frank Tashlin, who graduated from Warner Bros. cartoons to the matching elasticity of Ms. Mansfield. Their brightest hour and a half together was probably "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?," made in 1957, and now featured in a short Tashlin season at Film Forum. The film stars Tony Randall as a spineless advertising copywriter who saves his job, and risks his fiancée (Betsy Drake), by signing Rita Marlowe (Mansfield spoofing her own image as a Hollywood man-cruncher) to front a lipstick campaign. Cue a majestic parade of dumbed-up dialogue: "She was a tsarina." "I don't care what was wrong with her." The plot curdles toward the end, but the verve of the gags and the surprising bite of the satire (check out Randall's gesture to the TV audience midway through) leave the movie as fresh as Stay-Put, the gloss on Rita's lips. "Color by De Luxe," the credits announce, and you can feel it in every hair of her hand-dyed poodle.

—*Anthony Lane*

other magazines are disconcerting, wait until you see them looming more than four feet high on the wall like Big Brother (and Sister) posters. Schoeller zooms in so near to Angelina Jolie, Valentino, Pelé, Donald Rumsfeld, and Jack Nicholson that the viewer has to back off just to get some perspective on the odd terrain. The faces that appear impervious to this sort of scrutiny (including Bill Clinton's and Brad Pitt's) are, in the end, no less alarming than those that have clearly weathered some storms. It's interesting to see Cindy Sherman in this company—the master of disguises looks just as inscrutable without one. Through Sept. 1. (Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006.)

RICHARD SERRA
Serra's recent efforts are considerably more earthbound than the spirals and arcs that soared through previous decades and into public controversy. Weight, rather than lightness, is his professed interest here. One sculpture, called "Round," is a big, eye-level plug of steel. Other works turn slabs of oxidizing metal on their sides to create simple compositions—in one case, lining the walls like wainscotting. "Equal Weights and Measures" arranges six boxes to create, when one steps back, a three-dimensional line graph. Even the titles ape the faux-scientific rigidity and precision of sixties minimalism—a shame, since these are the orthodoxies Serra originally set out to destroy. Here he re-creates Donald Judd (though with a rust patina) rather than forging past him. Through Sept. 23. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

"ART VS. REAL LIFE: CANADIAN STORIES"
In contrast with the art coming out of Winnipeg, Manitoba, the unlikely hotbed of Canadiana that produced Royal Art Lodge and Marcel Dzama, or Vancouver's long reign in conceptual photography, the "stories" here don't differ much from American ones. Young painters trawl the boundaries of neo-symbolism, neo-expressionism, and naïve art. Canadian precedents can be seen in Carlos and Jason Sanchez's photograph of an affectless youngster in his bedroom, which conjures Jeff Wall, and Seth Scriver's airbrushed paintings of ghosts (or some sort of creepy, ethereal creatures) nod to Dzama. Over all, however, one must puzzle at the curator Katharine Mulherin's statement that this is her "dream show" lineup; surely there is more talent among the younger generation of Canadians than what's on view here. Through Sept. 9. (Morgan Lehman, 317 Tenth Ave. 212-268-6699.)

"GALERIE DANIEL BUCHHOLZ AT METRO PICTURES"
Metro Pictures adopts a new strategy for tackling the obligatory summer group show: invite a friendly European gallery to act as foreign-exchange student. Buchholz is the German representative of several artists in Metro's stable, including T. J. Wilcox, Lucy McKenzie, and Jack Goldstein, whose work here will be familiar to New Yorkers. But he also brings solid work by Germans and Austrians like Florian Pumhösl, Henning Bohl, Jochen Klein, and Lukas Duwenhögger. Buchholz's gallery is located behind an antiquarian bookstore in Cologne; various antique-y texts and illustrative images serve as a reminder of home, and his cataloguing sensibilities bring an Old World flavor to Metro's Hollywood- and Madison Avenue-inflected conceptual roots. Through Sept. 16. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

"SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION 2: THE INNER WORKINGS OF COLD CONTACT"
It's not life that art imitates anymore, but Hollywood, where sequels and titles pregnant with faux-philosophical gravitas reign. "Cold Contact" (enter Mel Gibson, Tom Cruise, or another chastened action star) refers here to solitude, reflection, and "the decay of cultural memory." Some of these works actually fit that bill rather well, like Scott Hug's paintings of tabloid-hounded celebrities, Mathilde ter Heijne's chilling video about female suicide bombers, or Xenobia Bailey's crocheted "Sistah Paradise" tent, conceived as a relic from the ministry of an African spiritual adviser enslaved in America. Others, like Manabu Yamanaka's photographs of children with deformities and Kosyo's human skulls made from resin, pander more to those blockbuster impulses: they're full of shock and flash, but lean on substance. Through Sept. 9. (Stux, 530 W. 25th St. 212-352-1600.)

"I WILL NOT MAKE ANY MORE BORING ART: LITHOGRAPHS, PUBLICATIONS, AND EPHEMERA FROM THE NOVA SCOTIA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN"
The roster of artists who made prints or whose writings were published by this university press in the late sixties and early seventies is impressive: Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, John Baldessari, Daniel Buren, Douglas Huebler, Hans Haacke, Yvonne Rainer, Lawrence Weiner, Sol LeWitt. It's a particularly impressive feat, since the program coaxed conceptualists—artists leading the anti-object revolution—into the print studio to create lasting documents. Some of the lithographs echo iconic works, like Acconci's self-biting "Trademarks" performance, Graham's suburban "Homes for America" magazine spread, or the Baldessari edict that supplies the show's title. Among the art and ephemera, however, are a few surprises: letters and memos and books one hopes the press will rerelease, as was recently the case with Donald Judd's complete writings from 1959 to 1975. Through Sept. 23. (Printed Matter, Inc., 195 Tenth Ave. 212-925-0325.)

Short List

"SOUTINE AND MODERN ART": Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Sept. 8.

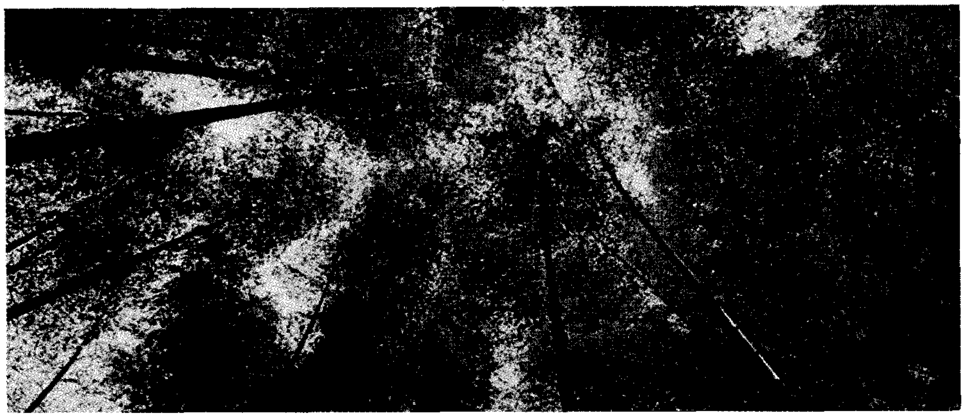
GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

ALEXANDER CALDER
There are six works by the perennial crowd-pleaser Calder on view in the Public Art Fund's current installation: five freestanding painted-steel sculptures in City Hall Park and, inside the hall itself, a mobile made of ovoid disks in black steel. With summer plantings at their height and the fountain bubbling, the outdoor pieces—which date from the late fifties through the late seventies—look like charmingly abstracted zoo animals amid the greenery. But the mobile is the pièce de résistance, striking just the right outré note in the graceful Federal-style rotunda. Normally, only organized tours are allowed into the building, but a nice police officer may let you take a peek. Through March 18, 2007. (City Hall Park. For further information, see www.publicartfund.org.)

"MARILYN"
Like the pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, and Niagara Falls, Marilyn Monroe was one of those marvels every photographer wanted to snap. Even before she made a movie, Monroe's love affair with the camera had turned her into a pop icon, and she was rarely out of some photographer's sight. Cecil Beaton, Elliott Erwitt, Eve Arnold, Andre De Dienes, and Philippe Halsman, all included here, were among the lucky ones who captured her, but plenty of others took a shot at the legend, and she vamped them all. Shooting from Samuel Goldwyn's upper-story window, Phil Stern catches Monroe striding across a movie lot, alone and unaware but smiling like she hasn't a care in the world. Through Sept. 1. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 212-966-6223.)

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

"MATERIAL WORLD"
Five artists offer varied commentary on the urban landscape, with sculpture burrowed into bustling public spaces in downtown Brooklyn. Corin Hewitt's "Legacy" is a rainbow made from street-sweeping detritus—dirt, candy wrappers, and



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bottle caps—cast in bronze and resin, arcing out of a dormant flower bed. Two species of cylinder are jointed to make Peter Kreider's leggy marble fire hydrants that conjure Greek columns, and Mamiko Otsubo's little greenhouses installed in a building's atrium bring a mediated version of nature to the corporate environment. Also included are pieces by Matthew Day Jackson and Rachel Foullon. Through Sept. 10. (MetroTech Center, Brooklyn, Public Art Fund. 212-980-4575.)

OUT OF TOWN

THE FIELDS AT ART OMI
Columbia County's premier sculpture park is nestled among rolling green hills, with a gorgeous view of the purple-tinged Catskills in the distance. Perennial installations include Carl Andre's "Cascade," which resembles a set of ancient marble steps that lead nowhere, and Donald Lipski's goofy "Dirt Ball," a huge orb made of rope. A recent addition is DeWitt Godfrey's wonderful "Picker Sculpture," in which giant ribbons of Corten steel are squeezed between the trees. Other artists have expanded the sculpture-park idiom, using strobe lights (Olafur Eliasson), sound (Matthew McCaslin and Jeff Talman), or computers (J. Shih Chieh Huang), while a summer installation of photographs printed on vinyl mesh, by Type A, Portia Munson, Meredith Allen, and others, is inserted cleverly into the woodland landscape. Ongoing. (Omi International Arts Center, 59 Letter S Rd., Ghent, N.Y. 518-392-2181.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

"MET IN THE PARKS"
Peter Gelb, the dynamic new general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, is taking the house into all sorts of new initiatives this season, but the company will end the summer in traditional fashion, offering its popular series of free concerts at parks throughout the five boroughs and in New Jersey; there are no fancy costumes or sets to be seen, but the music-making is remarkably genuine. The first of the two operas is **"Rigoletto,"** with Olga Markarina, Wendy White, Bruce Sledge, and Mark Rucker (as Rigoletto); Joseph Colaneri conducts. (Cunningham Park, Queens. Aug. 30.) ♦ Mark Delavan brings his robust voice and commanding stage presence to the title role; Norah Amsellem, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, and José Luis Duval complete the cast. (Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick, N.J. Sept. 2.) ♦ **"La Traviata"** features Hei-Kyung Hong, Wookyung Kim, and Charles Taylor in the leading roles; Derrick Inouye. (Brookdale Park, Montclair, N.J. Sept. 1.) (All performances are at 8; no tickets required. For more information, call 212-362-6000. These are the final performances.)

"OPERA ON TAP"
Casual-dress opera happens inside, too, courtesy of this resilient little company—if that's the right word—of beer-friendly singers, which is quickly becoming a Park Slope tradition. The young group of professionally trained vocalists (who have sung with such organizations as City Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin) and their instrumentalist friends bring their gig to Manhattan for the first time, at the Parkside Lounge. (317 E. Houston St. Aug. 29 at 7. For more information, see www.operaontap.com.)

SOHEIL NASSERI
Nasseri, a young New York pianist with a strong independent streak, is an artist in the grand manner of the old salons, combining old and new music in unconventional ways. He offers two free recitals this week in the intimate space of the Klavierhaus piano showroom. Aug. 29 at 8: The German tradition gets its due with a concert featuring not only Beethoven's Sonata in D Major, Op. 28 ("Pastoral"), and Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze" but also Brahms's First Piano Concerto (with Alan Ling, on second piano, playing a reduction of the orchestral score). ♦ Aug. 31 at 8: A program of novelties, in which Ronn Yedidia's "Apparitions" (1995) mixes with such works as Britten's "Night Piece," Sorabji's Sonata No. 0 (1917), three of Schubert's "Moments Musicaux," and the original version of Rachmaninoff's formidable Sonata No. 2 in B-Flat Minor. (Seventh Ave. at 58th St. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC
The floating chamber-music series offers one program to spread over a very long Labor Day Weekend, but it will be performed by three of the barge's favorite artists: the violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Edward Arron, and the pianist Olga Vinokur. The centerpiece of the concert is a rare item, a Bargemusic commission (Behzad Ranjbaran's "Shiraz" Trio), surrounded by piano trios by Brahms (No. 3, in C Minor) and Tchaikovsky. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Aug. 31 and Sept. 1-2 at 7:30 and Sept. 3 at 4.)

TABLES FOR TWO
CRAFTSTEAK

85 Tenth Ave., at 15th St. (212-400-6699)—During the prime dinner hour at this West Chelsea steak house, the large round booths fill up with groups of men, the collars of their dress shirts carefully loosened. The younger ones ostentatiously chomp on unlit cigars, compare notes on the best golf clubs, and recap last night's poker game. Here is the crowd that might order foie gras and peppery beef carpaccio, heaping bowls of crisp fries, perfectly battered onion rings, and thick slabs of precisely graded meat, all in one evening. The room itself could be called handsome, in the sense that it looks expensive without being particularly attractive. It's cavernous and clangorous, with an immense glass wall, which also acts as wine storage, separating the bar from the dining room, a rather sloppy landscape painting of the High Line on another wall, and a few lumps of unsightly pink salt rock scattered about. But the seats are roomy and comfortable, and the tables are narrow and spaced wide enough apart that a little insider information can be kept between friends.

The food is not nearly as blunt and bland as the décor might suggest. One recent evening, heirloom cherry tomatoes, accompanied by a spicy pile of cress, were soft and skin-free and burst with a bright sweetness. The roasted duck had a gentle infusion of lavender and berries that didn't stand in the way of the poultry's natural flavor. And then there were the sixteen varieties of steaks, a bit of ridiculous culinary machismo—is the "platinum Wagyu" from Australia really worth twenty dollars an ounce, or is it just showing off? A New York strip of (non-platinum) Wagyu beef was tender and juicy, but its rub had a too aggressive salinity; even the more assertive grass-fed filet mignon wilted a bit under the seasoning.

Perhaps it's that this restaurant is only one branch of Tom Colicchio's ever-expanding empire, perhaps it's all the expense accounts being charged up around the room, but its luxury has a corporate chill. Late-evening customers who have lingered over dessert—a childish, indulgent list that includes doughnuts, a make-your-own sundae, and a sticky-bun doppelgänger called "monkey bread"—might find the lights going up momentarily, giving an eerie glimpse of the room's origins, with the diners themselves so many widgets waiting to leave the factory floor. (Open daily for dinner. Main courses $26-$120.)

—Andrea Thompson

ISSUE PROJECT ROOM
Three international laptop virtuosos—Ikue Mori, DJ Olive, and Martin Baumgartner—meet on the neutral ground of the Gowanus neighborhood to create a series of improvised electronic "soundscapes" at Suzanne Fiol's experimentalist-music haven, a converted factory space. (400 Carroll St., between Bond and Nevins Sts., Brooklyn. 718-330-0313. Aug. 31 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

SKANEATELES FESTIVAL
Twenty-six years ago, David and Louise Robinson decided that the Finger Lakes region needed some first-rate summer chamber music. Their festival, named for the lake on which their house sits (concerts are occasionally offered on the front porch), has maintained a small-town feel even while attracting first-rate talent. Aug. 31 at 8: In the first of two "Four on the Floor" concerts at the First Presbyterian Church, such musicians as the pianist Elinor Freer, the violist Masumi Per Rostad, and the soprano Lauren Skuce offer songs and chamber works by Handel, Bridge, Mozart (the Flute Quartet in D Major, K. 285), and Shostakovich (the Seven Romances on Poems by Aleksander Blok). ♦ Sept. 1 at 8: The same personnel gather to perform works by Rossini, Ravel (the "Chansons Madécasses"), Libby Larsen, and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in C Minor). ♦ Sept. 2 at 8: The Skaneateles Festival Orchestra offers the final program, at Brook Farm: Bach's Third Brandenburg Concerto, Mozart's Flute Concerto in D Major, and Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" (featuring the violinist Ilya Kaler and the flutist Marina Piccinini). (Skaneateles, N.Y. 315-685-7418. For more information, see www.skanfest.org.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The season at the Maverick's intimate woodland hall comes to a close with concerts by a group of expert and impassioned young musicians. Sept. 2 at 6: The cellist Zuill Bailey and the pianist Simone Dinnerstein perform Beethoven's complete variations for cello and piano, along with the Cello Sonata by Shostakovich, a lyrical departure from his usually sardonic style. ♦ Sept. 3 at 3: Three close colleagues—the violinist Jennifer Frautschi, the hornist Eric Ruske, and the pianist Pedja Muzijevic—offer "Dangerous Liaisons: The Brahms-Schumann Connection," a slate of works by Robert Schumann (the Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Minor), his wife, Clara, and their young acolyte, Johannes Brahms (the magnificent Horn Trio). (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The summer winds down at northern Connecticut's string-quartet shrine. Sept. 2 at 6:30: The Shanghai String Quartet, one of the most vital and disciplined of the new generation, is joined by the violist Michael Tree and the cellist Robert Martin to offer performances of two magisterial works: the joyous, early String Sextet No. 1 in B-Flat Major by Brahms, and the complex yet confident String Quintet with Cello in C Major from Schubert's

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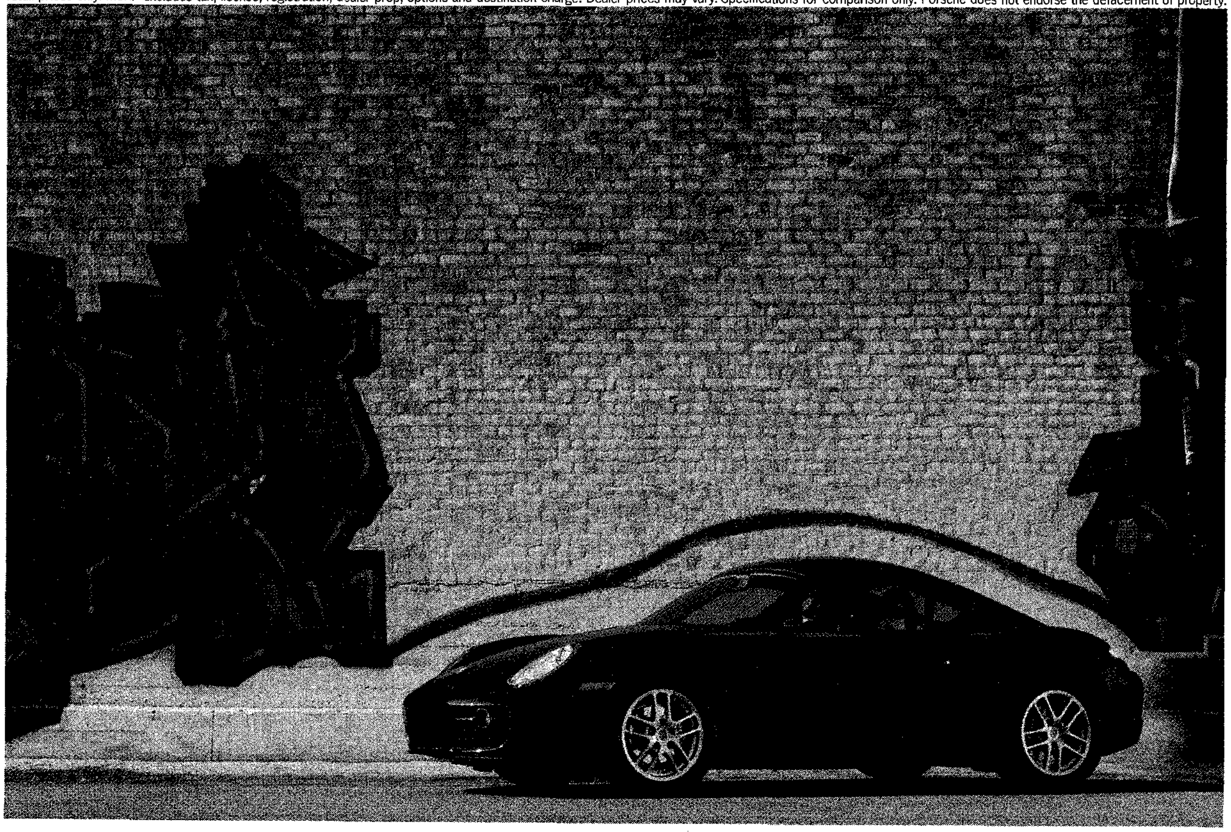

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final year. ◆ Sept. 3 at 3: The Shanghais return to play an all-Beethoven program featuring not only the second and third of the "Razumovsky" Quartets but also an intermission talk on the composer by Edmund Morris, the author of a recent biography. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

WINDHAM CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Four artists with deep roots in the northern Hudson Valley—the cellist Ashley Bathgate, the violinist Magdalena Golczewski, and the duo-pianists Vladimir Pleshakov and Elena Winther—participate in the final concert of the Windham season, an evening of works by Haydn (the Piano Trio in G Major, "Gypsy Rondo"), Rachmaninoff, Robert Manno, and Johann Strauss II (the "Artist's Life" Waltzes). (Windham Performing Arts Center, Windham, N.Y. 518-678-9309. Sept. 2 at 8.)

SOUTH MOUNTAIN CONCERTS
After most of the Northeast's classical-music festivals close down, this longtime outfit (founded by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, better known for her work at the Library of Congress) begins. The season is short but high-class, and is largely sold out on subscription. The series begins with a concert by the esteemed Mendelssohn String Quartet, who add a modern masterwork, "Thus the Night," by Henri Dutilleux, to a program that also features quartets by Haydn (in E-Flat Major, Op. 76, No. 6) and Mendelssohn (the Quartet in F Minor, Op. 80). (Route 7, Pittsfield, Mass. Sept. 3 at 3. Remaining tickets at the door. For more information, see www.southmountainconcerts.org.)

MOVIES OPENING

ANDY WARHOL: A DOCUMENTARY FILM
Ric Burns directed this four-hour exploration of the artist's life and work. Opening Sept. 1. (Film Forum.)

CRANK
Jason Statham, Efren Ramirez, Amy Smart, and Dwight Yoakam star in this thriller, directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor, about a hit man who is poisoned and will die if his heart rate slows. Opening Sept. 1. (In wide release.)

CROSSOVER
A drama directed by Preston A. Whitmore II, about a college kid with a basketball scholarship who wants to become a doctor. Starring Wesley Jonathan and Anthony Mackie. Opening Sept. 1. (In wide release.)

FLANNEL PAJAMAS
A drama about an on-again, off-again romance, directed by Jeff Lipsky. Opening Sept. 1. (Angelika Film Center.)

LASSIE
A remake of the children's canine classic, directed by Charles Sturridge, starring Peter Dinklage, Peter O'Toole, and Samantha Morton. Opening Sept. 1. (In wide release.)

LOOKING FOR KITTY
Edward Burns directed and co-stars in this comedy, about a private eye (Burns) who helps a baseball coach (David Krumholtz) look for his missing wife. Opening Sept. 1. (Quad Cinema.)

MUTUAL APPRECIATION
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Sept. 1. (Cinema Village.)

RIDING ALONE FOR THOUSANDS OF MILES
A drama, directed by Zhang Yimou and starring Ken Takakura, about a Japanese man who travels to rural China for the chance to film a folksinger. In Mandarin and Japanese. Opening Sept. 1. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Sept. 1. (IFC Center.)

THE WICKER MAN
Neil LaBute wrote and directed this remake of the British thriller, about a sheriff who uncovers a band of occult plotters. Starring Ellen Burstyn and Nicolas Cage. Opening Sept. 1. (In wide release.)

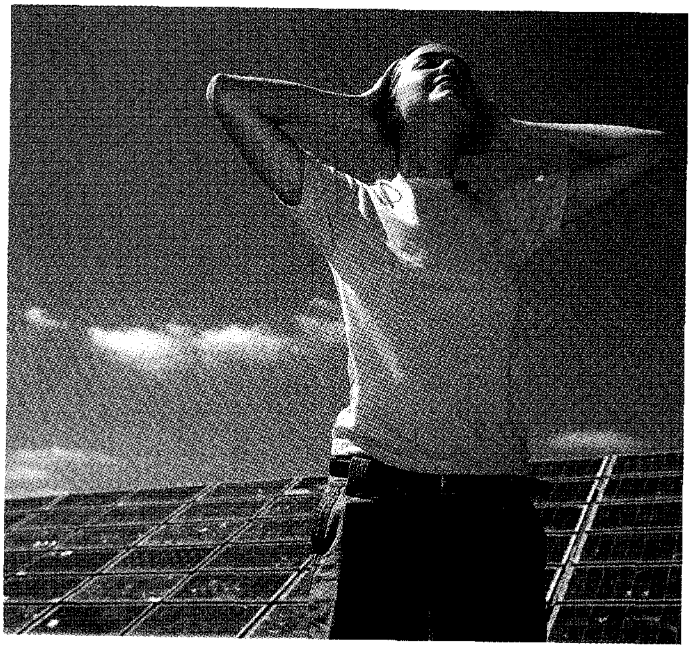
NOW PLAYING

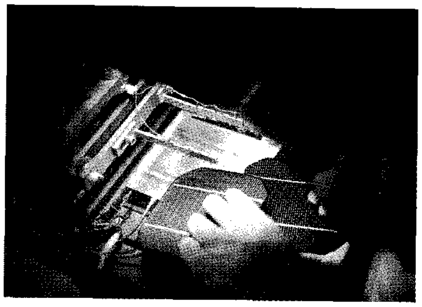
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
D. W. Griffith's first sound film, from 1930, is as ungainly and majestic as its subject. As the accidental titan of American destiny, Walter Huston dominates the film with a sly yet grand manner and a prophetic diction. Though the script (by Stephen Vincent Benét) runs from Lincoln's birth, in a log cabin, through his death, in Ford's Theatre, its through line is an idea—his unyielding faith that the Union must be preserved at all costs. For much of the film, Griffith, born in 1875, reaches back to his pre-cinematic past as a stage melodramatist and captures the intimate grandeur of history's anterooms. But the Civil War's battlefields give rise to desperate frescoes akin to the photographs of Mathew Brady, and the technique of sound inspires Griffith to new sensations, as off-screen voices suggest Lincoln's besieged mind at work or Presidential decrees issuing from on high. In action scenes, Griffith thrust his camera at raw physical reality, whether hammered wedges splitting logs or grasslands cruelly rutted by war wagons. He brought these new realistic methods to fierce fruition in his next film, "The Struggle," from 1931, which flopped and was his last.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 31.)

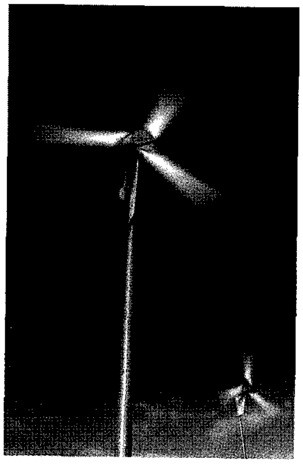
COLLEGE
A beautiful little comedy. Buster Keaton is a bookworm, working his way through college and determined to become a star athlete. The story line isn't as miraculously fresh as in a couple of his films, but it allows for some of his most startlingly inventive stunts. Despite the many pilferings from this film (it has been a gold mine for other comedians), the routines are executed so precisely and with such an air of confident innocence that they are charged with surprise—and probably will be forever. Released in 1927. Silent.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Sept. 4.)

CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER WOMEN
If audiences are split down the middle on the merits of Hans Canosa's film, that will be a fitting response. From beginning to end, the movie itself is divided in two, with one half of the screen going mostly to Helena Bonham Carter and the other being hogged by Aaron Eckhart. They play a pair of wedding guests who meet in New York and spend at least half the night together; in the course of their discussions, and their entwinings, it becomes clear that they were serious old flames and that what the film recounts is a rekindling. This makes it too sad to be a fling, and the couple's time together feels increasingly joyless. Canosa wrings as much drama as he can from his fifty-fifty screen, and the actors respond well to the camera's nagging inspection (which gives a listener as much attention as a person delivering lines), yet by the end the device feels helplessly claustrophobic—worthy of something freer and fresher, perhaps, than a one-night stand in a hotel.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/7 & 14/06.) (62nd and Broadway and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE DESCENT
A group of female friends gather together for their yearly spelunking adventure and descend into an







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KEY NOTES

THOUGHT LEADERS PROPEL INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

From conducting research in the biosciences to increasing green education to developing energy-efficient housing, important work begins with the commitment of individuals. The following three leaders in environmental thinking have motivated scientists and students alike to uncover ways to conserve, develop, and produce energy that will be safe, clean, and abundant.

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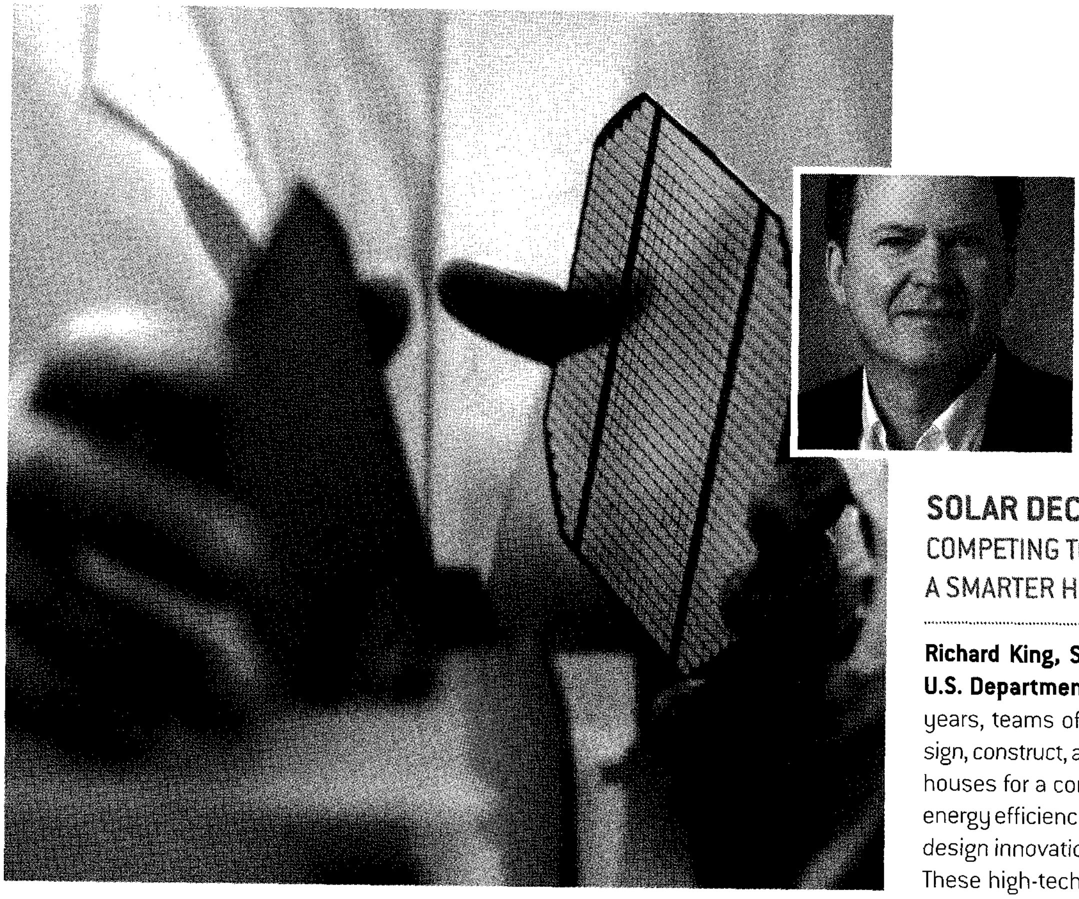
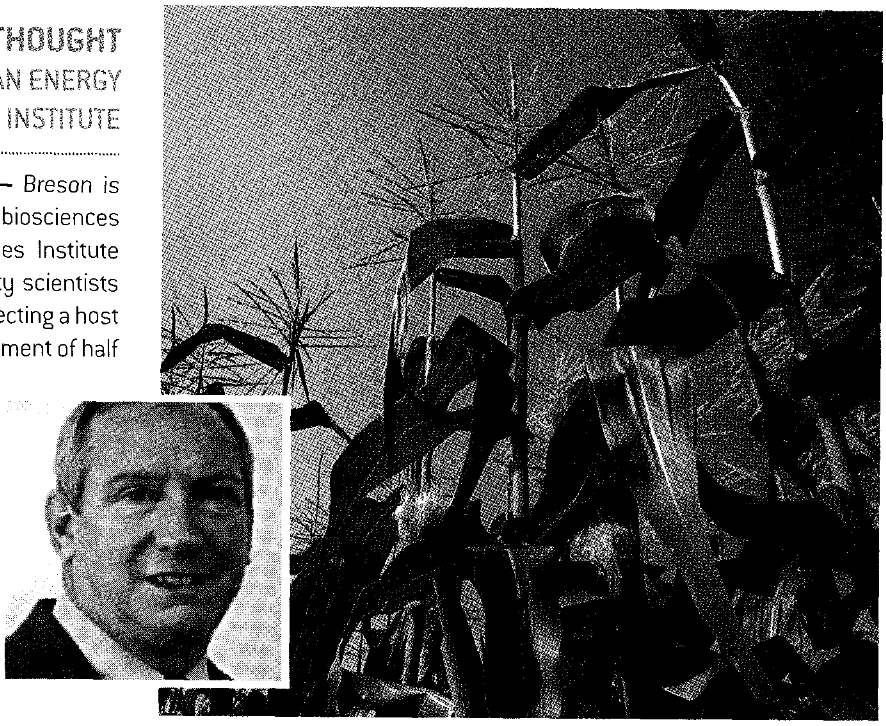


SOLAR DECATHLON
COMPETING TO BUILD A SMARTER HOME

Richard King, Solar Decathlon Director, U.S. Department of Energy – Every two years, teams of university students design, construct, and operate solar-powered houses for a competition that measures energy efficiency, energy production, and design innovation at the Solar Decathlon. These high-tech green homes will go on view in the fall of 2007 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Contest rules require that each solar-powered house generate enough energy to power all its household needs while providing all the comforts and conveniences we expect today. King says, "Teaching the next generation of architects and engineers the benefits of solar energy and energy efficiency will pay dividends for all Americans." BP is a major sponsor of the Solar Decathlon.

FUEL FOR THOUGHT
CREATING AN ENERGY BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

Jim Breson, Project General Manager, BP – Breson is working to launch the world's first dedicated biosciences energy research lab, the Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI), which will be staffed by both university scientists and experts from BP. Currently focused on selecting a host academic institution, Breson has BP's commitment of half a billion dollars over the next ten years to support the institute's research in biotechnology. EBI is certain to be at the forefront of efforts to seek what Breson calls "real solutions to help global energy security and extend the nation's fuel supply."



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ENLIGHTENING THE NEXT GENERATION

Kristen Couchot, Science Teacher, Sheldon High School

Kristen Couchot is one of nearly two thousand prekindergarten to twelfth-grade teachers in California and Texas to receive a cash grant of $5,000 or $10,000 from BP. The initiative is aimed at sparking students' interest in alternative energy solutions in an effort to influence their families today, and to prepare them for making informed decisions about their energy usage as adults. "Living in an area with the rapid growth of the Sacramento Valley, it is imperative that residents understand the consequences of their energy choices," says Couchot, who will use the grant she won this year to help her class to design and construct a model of an energy-efficient suburban home.

Everyone leaves a carbon footprint, a measurable amount of greenhouse gases produced through routine human activities. Individuals who wish to reduce the size of their footprint can make lifestyle choices that promote environmental sustainability, adapt new technologies, and use renewable energy sources. Even the smallest efforts can help: Switch off lights and appliances when they are not needed. Start a carpool. Insulate and weatherize your home. There is an added benefit to making these changes: it can save money.

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uncharted Appalachian cave, where they soon find themselves lost inside a maze of pitch-black tunnels and realize that they are not alone. The first half of the film is thrilling, with the director, Neil Marshall, keenly conveying claustrophobia and disorientation in dark, forbidding places. And the actors, particularly Natalie Mendoza, as the group's unofficial leader, are primed with an athletic prowess that's convincingly heroic. When the film turns horrific in the second half, the group is in splinters, being picked off by albino monsters that are semi-human and blind as bats. With audacious lighting (huge portions of the screen are filmed in murky darkness) and fantastically grimy sets (built on a soundstage in England), Marshall constructs a shrewdly assaulting atmosphere. Bloody mayhem has rarely been so anxiously inspired.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

FACTOTUM
A fine, unflustered attempt by the Norwegian director Bent Hamer—previously responsible for the trance-inducing "Kitchen Stories"—to make visual sense of the world according to Charles Bukowski. The movie, scripted by Hamer and Jim Stark, is adapted from Bukowski's semiautobiographical "Factotum" and other writings, and it maintains his uneasy balance between fury and indolence; we can never be sure, from one scene to the next, whether Henry Chinaski (Matt Dillon) is going to lie around or lash out. The story is too steeped in alcohol to support a sober plot: Chinaski weaves from one job to the next, and from the ravenous Jan (Lili Taylor) to the more languorous Laura (Marisa Tomei), both as boozed up as himself. Without Dillon, the film would slip down too easily; he lends it both mellowness and bite, and the underwater slowness of his movements, like the deep murmur of his voice-overs, convincingly renders a soul who, while often laughable, refuses to be utterly lost.—*A.L.* (8/28/06) (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HALF NELSON
The young Canadian actor Ryan Gosling is quietly charismatic as Dan Dunne, a schoolteacher in a tough section of Brooklyn who knows how to teach history to his thirteen- and fourteen-year-old African-American students. Dunne is smart and dedicated, but he's also freebasing cocaine. When a girl in his class, Drey (Shareeka Epps), catches him in the act, a bond develops between them. The movie, made with a handheld camera by the team of Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden, is alert to the tensions in the two characters' lives and the raffish neighborhood milieu, but one comes away from it thinking that the filmmakers have coddled their hero. He is, after all, failing not only himself but the students who depend on him. The sources of Dunne's addiction are obscure, but "Half Nelson" nevertheless builds his problems into a parable of the misfortunes of liberalism.—*David Denby* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

IDLEWILD
André Benjamin and Antwan A. Patton, a.k.a. André 3000 and Big Boi of the hip-hop duo OutKast, star in this musical set in Prohibition-era rural Georgia. Rooster (Patton), a bootlegger's son with a talent for dance and a head for numbers, and Percival (Benjamin), a cerebral pianist being groomed to follow in his father's footsteps as an undertaker, join forces in a band, but Rooster gets caught up in gangster business, and the introverted Percival needs to find a way to bring his music to the world. Benjamin is a true star who brings understated and thoughtful sincerity to every line he speaks, Patton is sly and droll, and the entire cast (especially Terrence Howard, Faizon Love, and Ving Rhames) is a delight, but Bryan Barber directs with a music-video indiscipline, making shots with a casual profligacy and bathing them all in caramel light. The story strains to make a mythopoetic connection between the classics of African-American music and the personal history that they embody. OutKast's joyful, invigorating music takes the place of jazz (though the connection is tenuous at best), but the film's incoherence is capped by the bewildering banishment of the big production number and the best song to the end credits.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

THE ILLUSIONIST
Edward Norton as a master magician of plebeian origin in late-nineteenth-century imperial Austria, Jessica Biel as the young duchess he's in love with, Rufus Sewell as the intelligent but sadistic crown prince who wants to marry the duchess and take over the empire, and Paul Giamatti as the police inspector who is loyal to the prince but fascinated by the magician. Unconvincing controversy over whether the magician's playing with the relation of reality to illusion constitutes a political threat to the empire or just a threat to the prince's romantic ambitions; intelligent, beautifully photographed production in rather dry, very delicate color (Dick Pope is the cinematographer), but, all in all, a great deal of craftsmanship wasted over nothing. Directed by Neil Burger; based (sort of) on a story by Steven Millhauser. Shot in the Czech Republic.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

JOHN TUCKER MUST DIE
John Tucker (Jesse Metcalfe) is the star athlete and irresistible heartthrob of a big suburban high school. Three girls he plays around with find out about each other and help a fourth, the nondescript Kate (Brittany Snow), to become the surrogate seductress who will break his heart. The promising setup is botched in execution: the script lacks a feel for the sound and the substance of teen life, and the young performers are devoid of spirit. When the only spark of life is provided by Jenny McCarthy, as Kate's serial-dating mother, it's trouble. Next to this terminally witless fare, "Mean Girls" is Shakespeare.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE
A charming, independently made family comedy about a winner-take-all society—America—that is driving its citizens crazy. Its hero and victim, Richard Hoover (Greg Kinnear), is a motivational speaker who has invented a nine-step program for success. His seven-year-old daughter, Olive (Abigail Breslin), is entering a Little Miss Sunshine contest; his stepson, Dwayne (Paul Dano), has a private dream in which he is a Nietzschean Übermensch; his wife's brother (Steve Carell), whom the family has taken in, is the No. 1 Proust scholar in the country but has made a fool of himself over a male graduate student who has leaped into the bed of the No. 2 Proust scholar. Is winning everything? The writer, Michael Arndt, and the husband-and-wife directing team, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, narrowly avoid the family-comedy pitfalls of whimsy and mush, but Arndt has a good ear for domestic irritations and the acting is just tough enough to keep us off balance. With Alan Arkin and Toni Collette as the family's realists.—*D.D.* (7/31/06) (In wide release.)

MIAMI VICE
Michael Mann, returning to the sunshine-bright and overripe material of the old TV show (he was executive producer of the series), hasn't hidden the sun, exactly, but the general tone is darker, danker, dirtier, and much more violent. The euphemisms of television have vanished—the blood hits the wall with a splat—and the material is now grim and self-important. Colin Farrell is Detective Sonny Crockett, and Jamie Foxx is Detective Lieutenant Ricardo Tubbs. These are serious fellows; they don't engage in debonair lounge-lizard repartee—they hardly engage at all (Farrell is sullen and withdrawn). Pretending to be big-time drug transporters, the boys travel to Haiti and Colombia and insinuate themselves into a drug-smuggling ring. Mann's narrative method is terse, abrupt, and fragmentary, and his dialogue consists mainly of cop-and-drug-dealer jargon spit out of the corner of someone's mouth. The movie is hard to follow, but it has its moments of licentious pleasure, especially when Farrell and Gong Li, who plays the drug kingpin's mistress, take off for Cuba, speeding across the Caribbean in a twin-engine Super Cat.—*D.D.* (7/31/06) (In wide release.)

MONSTER HOUSE
Directed by Gil Kenan and produced by Robert Zemeckis and Steven Spielberg, this animated horror film, about a group of kids terrorized by a house that gobbles up all who pass by, has the scares and the wit of a great amusement-park ride. The motion-capture technology that Zemeckis de-

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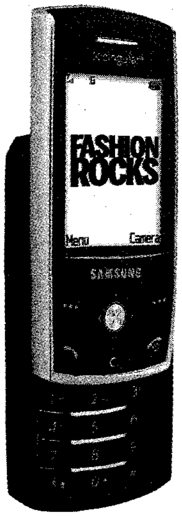

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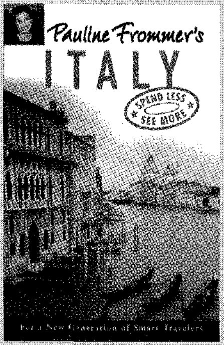

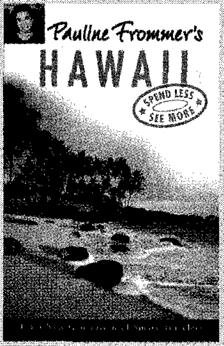

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veloped for "The Polar Express" (the actors are filmed and then exaggeratedly computer-animated) is even better suited to this creepy story. The screenplay is a boilerplate kids' film (the adults are clueless, and it's up to the children to save the day), but the snappy dialogue pops with a child's-eye view of adult conversation, and the thrills—and there are many—are wonderfully scary; they bring a smile after the fright. With the grimacing, motion-captured face of Kathleen Turner as the monster house.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

MUTUAL APPRECIATION

Andrew Bujalski's self-absorbed, meandering, intensely sincere film exemplifies—and risks parodying—independent filmmaking, and yet these limitations become strengths in the writer-director's personal, unstinting view of a classic problem—the shifting affections when a couple and a single guy are the best of friends. A trio of recent college graduates are scraping by in Williamsburg: Alan (Justin Rice), who has just come to New York to form an indie-rock band; his best friend, Lawrence (Bujalski), a low-intensity graduate student; and Lawrence's girlfriend, Ellie (Rachel Clift), an editorial assistant who becomes Alan's manager and conflicted admirer. Bujalski has a logical eye for parsing casually unfolding events with visual coherence, and his dryly satirical view of grownups' inevitable fatuities doesn't lose sight of the charming vanity of youthful illusions. As the artist, Alan is the film's moral center: practicing his guitar in his grungy Williamsburg room or soldiering along at his band's sparsely attended gig, he exudes the kind of dreamy faith and unrealistic determination that this film embodies, and that got it made.—*R.B.* (Cinema Village.)

PHFFFT!

In this comedy of remarriage, from 1954, Judy Holliday and Jack Lemmon star as a newly prosperous suburban couple who find that the magic has gone out of their eight-year union. Quickly divorced, both try to savor the single life in Manhattan but find themselves unable to escape each other's attentions. Holliday, famous as the timeless ditzy blonde, plays someone like herself, a smart and capable woman whose professional life requires her to dumb down. Here, as a soap-opera writer, she shines in sharply satirical scenes of live radio and TV drama. As a nerdy attorney attempting to swing, Lemmon offers frenzy tinged with pathos, though Kim Novak's grisly attempts at humor as a desperate good-time girl are entirely beside the point. The director, Mark Robson, had no idea what to do with the script's late-screwball comic complications but made much of the real-life milieu where they take place, a nouveau-bourgeois postwar New York that will be familiar to many baby boomers through family lore, where the makeup and the schmooze made for impenetrable masks and the Martini was the preferred solvent.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade; Aug. 31.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST

This is the second part of a trilogy, Disney having decided that there were dense thematic issues, not to mention narrative niceties, that could not be constrained within a single "Pirates" film; any financial consideration was, of course, entirely secondary. Once again, we accompany Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) as he pursues his fate—or the needle of his compass—across the waters. Keira Knightley resumes her romantic role, as does Orlando Bloom, although his presence is not exactly strong enough to rip a hole in the screen. The director, Gore Verbinski, may marshal the action into some kind of order, but the show is truly run (and strung out) by the special effects; why else would a writhing sea monster, having munched on one ship, come back for a second helping? If the film works, it is largely because of Depp, whose performance owes more and more to Mary Pickford and less to Douglas Fairbanks. Depp continues to dominate the proceedings, aided in this instance by Bill Nighy, who—together with his

POP NOTES
THEY LOVE THE EIGHTIES

For almost a decade, musicians have been borrowing things from the nineteen-eighties: haircuts, synthesizers, shoes. But, until now, acts haven't borrowed that many songs.

In 2004, a French band called Nouvelle Vague—the producers Marc Collin and Olivier Libaux—released a self-titled album of eighties hits performed by singers whose first language was not English, and who had never heard the songs they were assigned to sing. The results were diverting within a narrow stylistic range; the songs, whether originally by Depeche Mode or the Buzzcocks, became frisky bossa novas. For their wonderful second album, **"Bande à Part"** (Luaka Bop), the aesthetic has been widened beyond Brazilian sounds, though the arrangements remain acoustic. When the Cramps released "Human Fly," in 1979, it was a campy sci-fi joke rendered as fuzzy garage rock. Nouvelle Vague turn the song into slinky cabaret. The singer coos as she sings "buzz buzz" and "I'm an unzipped fly," a bit like Marilyn Monroe, but without the pose of innocence, and backed by the band from Tom Waits's "Rain Dogs."

With less success, the singer Grant-Lee Phillips addresses the same decade in **"nineteeneighties"** (Zoë), a collection of covers that turns a sombre song like Joy Division's "The Eternal" into an equally grim affair, but with more harmonica. It is Joy Division who have written the eighties standard that everyone attempts and nobody can entirely ruin. That song is "Love Will Tear Us Apart," and it was the linchpin of the first Nouvelle Vague album, a light samba that turned the ache of a failed romance into an unpleasant memory that, several cocktails later, might be gone. Susanna & the Magical Orchestra, from Norway, play the song on their new album, **"Melody Mountain"** (Rune Grammofon), as if everything but the memory were gone, reducing the song to a slow, defeated voice singing over two piano figures. The version that Ian Curtis would have had the hardest time imagining is Albert Kuvezin & Yat-Kha's version from their album **"Re-covers"** (World Village). Kuvezin practices Tuvan throat singing, a technique that creates growling tones several octaves below normal singing. Because Kuvezin's accent is heavy and his feel for the song's emotional peaks questionable, the song often sounds like Borat with a very bad cold, and it is hard to hear this version as anything other than a novelty. But when Kuvezin simply hums along with Curtis's melody, the song reasserts itself, proving that when the eighties pass back into history, "Love" will remain.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

animated beard—breathes life into the deceased Davy Jones.—*A.L.* (7/24/06) (In wide release.)

PRIZZI'S HONOR

Adapted from Richard Condon's prankish satire of American corruption, this John Huston picture has a ripe and daring comic tone. It revels voluptuously in the murderous finagling of the members of a Brooklyn Mafia family, and rejoices in their scams. It's like "The Godfather" acted out by the Munsters. Jack Nicholson's average-guyness as Charley, the clan's enforcer, is the film's touchstone: this is a baroque comedy about people who behave in ordinary ways in grotesque circumstances, and it has the juice of everyday family craziness in it. Everything in this picture works with everything else—which is to say that John Huston has it all in the palm of his big bony hand. With William Hickey as the shrunken old Don Corrado, ghouly and wormy, with tiny, shocking bright eyes; Anjelica Huston as the don's scheming granddaughter, a high-fashion Vampira who moves like a swooping bird and talks in a honking Brooklynese that comes out of the corner of her twisted mouth; Kathleen Turner as Charley's ravishingly pretty bride; John Randolph as Pop, the Prizzis' consigliere and Charley's beaming, proud father; Lee Richardson and Robert Loggia as the don's two sons; Lawrence Tierney as a corrupt cop; and Alexandra Ivanoff as the soprano in the wedding scene. Alex North's score, with its lush, parodistic use of Puccini, and some Rossini, a little Verdi, and a dash of Donizetti, too, actively contributes to the whirling texture of the scenes.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 3.)

QUINCEAÑERA

The fifteenth-birthday celebration, a rite of passage for Latinas, is the springboard for this drama of transformation and urban gentrification in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. The story concerns Magdalena (the newcomer Emily Rios, in a charming performance), who gets pregnant and is sent to live with her great-uncle (Chalo González) and her semi-delinquent gay cousin (Jesse Garcia). The writer-directors, Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, avoid histrionics and bring a gentler vitality to the conflicts of changing mores in the Latino community. Their colorful, optimistic view of the characters' complex lives is refreshingly unsentimental, and their almost giddy, bare-bones pride in the film's low-budget look is matter-of-factly cheering.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

SCOOP

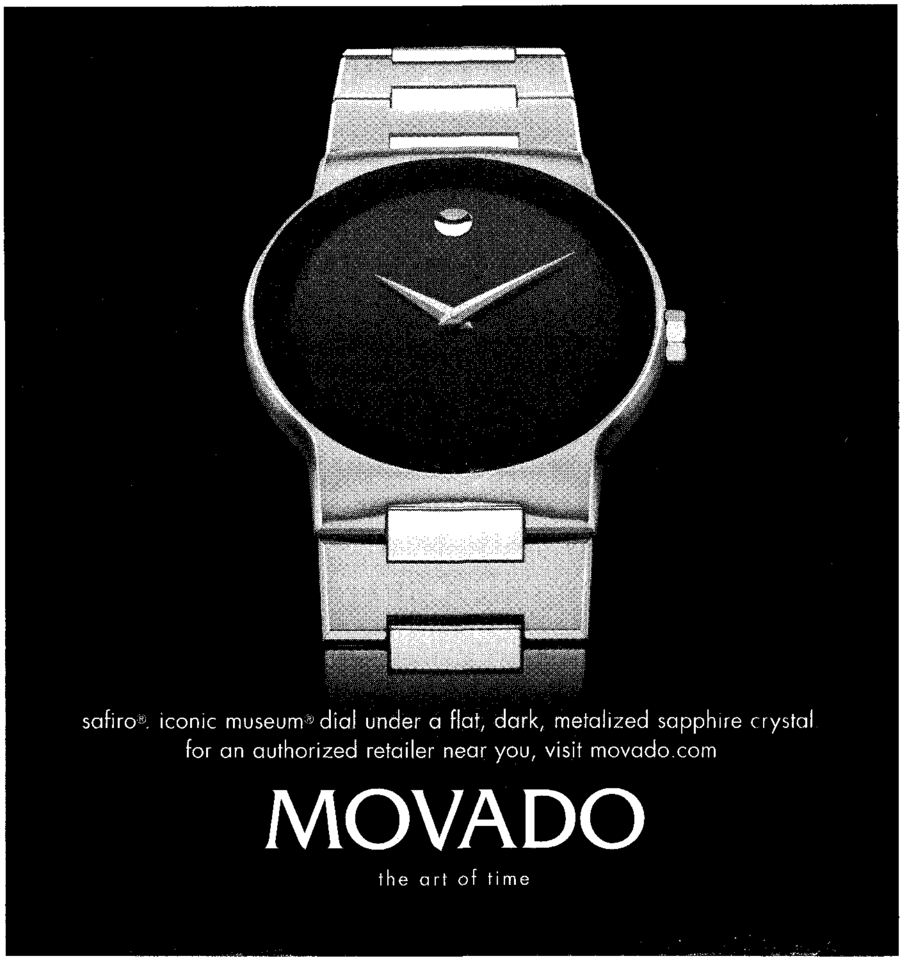
In Woody Allen's latest, Woody is a cut-rate magician known as the Great Splendini, and Scarlett Johansson, who is charming, is his protégée, Sondra, a college-newspaper reporter who gets a tip on a big story from a dead journalist (Ian McShane) conjured up by Splendini. The conceit is barely tolerable, but it gets the movie under way, and Woody and Scarlett are fitfully amusing as an unlikely pair of sleuths who run around London quarrelling and putting people on in posh houses and private clubs. To enjoy it, however, you have to love Woody's fumbling, stumbling delivery, with its many hesitations and sudden explosions of worry or distaste. At the age of seventy, he's certainly not hiding his crotchets. Hugh Jackman plays a powerful man who may or may not have committed a string of murders.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SNAKES ON A PLANE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

SPARROWS

Too long pegged just as Hollywood's original little sweetheart, Mary Pickford could show surprising range as a producer and as a performer. Anyone looking for a silent precedent to the celebrated Charles Laughton–James Agee "The Night of the Hunter" should check out this 1926 tale of horrific yet dreamlike suspense in which Pickford plays a teen-ager who leads a band of indentured kids to escape a swampy Southern "baby farm." As in Laughton's film, homegrown cruelty meshes with Germanic expressions of otherworldly visions, including an astonishing one of Jesus welcoming a sick babe into heaven (Hal Mohr, Charles Rosher, and Karl Struss did the seamless cinematography). But here the flight through nature isn't hallowed with fuzzy woodland creatures; at the harrowing high point, Pickford and her charges balance on a branch atop a pool of snapping alligators. William Beaudine directed.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Sept. 2-3.)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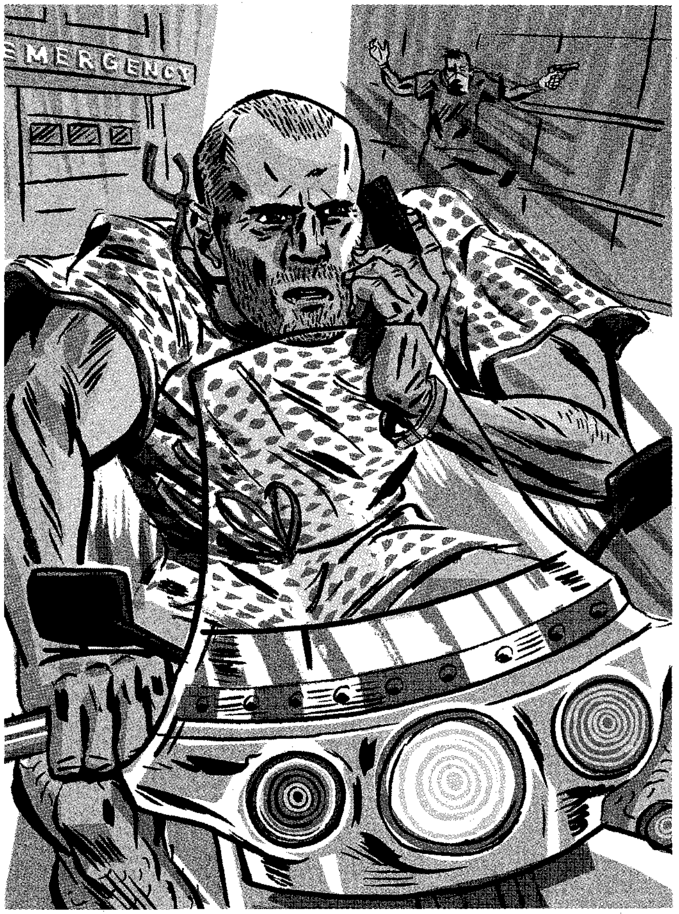
TALK TO HER
In Pedro Almodóvar's odd but touching 2002 romantic drama, two very different men are drawn together by a common task: taking care of women who have fallen into a coma. Benigno (Javier Cámara), a shy, seemingly asexual young male nurse, looks after Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful ballet dancer. Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a fortyish Argentine writer, becomes the lover of a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter (Rosario Flores). After she is gored in the ring, she never speaks again. Both love affairs are touched by fantasy. Almodóvar's point appears to be that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness. The movie was shot in a new, subdued style for the director: past and present flow together, and everything seems touched with a melancholy magic. Two ballets by the choreographer Pina Bausch are integral to the film's themes. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY
This ambitious, overblown comedy offers elaborate imitations of humor but is rarely funny. The two-part title alone hints at trouble: Will Ferrell throws his ample comic weight at the broad target of Nascar racing, and also at the sodden, sentimental tale of a racing legend's rise, fall, and rise. The result is a garish, loud parody of a garish, loud world, as well as a treacly fable of family togetherness that drags on like a never-ending pit stop. Sacha Baron Cohen, as Jean Girard, a gay French existentialist Formula One driver who challenges Ricky Bobby, adds little to the lines that the writers—Adam McKay, who also directed, and Ferrell—gave him, and the script must have seemed much funnier in the office (and the bloopers that accompany the closing credits prove it). One scene, a family dinner where Ricky Bobby says grace in his own unique way, is memorably sharp, and Greg Germann and Molly Shannon bring surprising pathos to small roles as a race-team owner and his alcoholic wife.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED
Kirby Dick's new documentary takes on the Motion Picture Association of America, and, in particular, the power of its ratings board to tell us which words, activities, and body parts we should or should not, as moviegoers, be allowed to consume. This is a tempting subject, and the punches launched by Dick and some of his contributors, including John Waters, Kimberly Peirce, and Kevin Smith, hit home. At times, however, the movie starts to flail; brief glances at the Hollywood blacklist and the photographic evidence from Abu Ghraib tend to confuse rather than propel the argument. The neatest gambit is Dick's hiring of a private investigator to trace and name the members of both the ratings board and the subsequent appeals tribunal, all of whom have until now retained their anonymity. Much of the film may be a wasted opportunity, but few will question Dick's demand for transparency from those who sit and frown in judgment on what we watch.—*A.L.* (8/28/06) (IFC Center.)

WORLD TRADE CENTER
Rushing downtown on the morning of September 11, 2001, a group of Port Authority cops, including Sergeant John McLoughlin (Nicolas Cage) and the rookie Will Jimeno (Michael Peña), encounter a hallucinatory storm of paper drifting down from the Twin Towers. Later, trapped in the rubble of the collapsing buildings, McLoughlin and Jimeno provide each other with whatever support and consolation they are capable of, while, at home, their families respond to the catastrophe and their uncertainty about the men with convincing degrees of fear, bravado, panic, and rage. Oliver Stone's aesthetically conservative 9/11 movie is a work of considerable power that captures the oppressive physical strangeness and exhausting emotional demands of that day. With Maria Bello as McLoughlin's wife, the cool-headed Donna, and Maggie Gyllenhaal as Jimeno's wife, the volatile, more demanding Allison. The movie was conceived by the late producer Debra Hill and written by Andrea Berloff.—*D.D.* (8/21/06) (In wide release.)

YOU, ME AND DUPREE
Kate Hudson and the heavy-browed Matt Dillon, who don't really belong together as actors, get married; the newlyweds take into their house a life-loving bum, played by Owen Wilson, who proceeds to wreck the union. The basic premise is slightly offensive: the Wilson character is presented as a test of everyone's humanity, but he's actually a pain in the neck whom anyone in their right mind, and especially newlyweds, would immediately throw out. Wilson runs around bare-assed and is meant to be lovable, which may be a jerk's last illusion. The direction, by Anthony and Joe Russo, is slightly off in every scene—perhaps because the material never made sense in the first place. With Michael Douglas as Hudson's sourpuss father.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)



"Crank," an action film about a poisoned hit man, opens Sept. 1.

ERIK T. JOHNSON

Also Playing

ACCEPTED: In wide release. **BARNYARD:** In wide release. **FRATRICIDE:** Film Forum. **INVINCIBLE:** In wide release. **THE QUIET:** In wide release. **STEP UP:** In wide release. **TRUST THE MAN:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"New-Filmmakers Presents." Aug. 30 at 6: "Take Me to the River" (2004, Kenneth Eng). ♦ Aug. 30 at 7:15: "The Lady from Stockholm" (2005, Eddy Von Mueller and Evan Lieberman). ♦ Aug. 30 at 8:30: "Approaching Union Square" (2006, Marc Meyers). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Aug. 30 at 7: Short films by Georges Méliès (1907-12). ♦ Aug. 31 at 7: Short films by Marie Menken (1955-63). ♦ "The *Onion* Presents." Aug. 31 at 8: "Monkeypiece Theatre 2," twelve short films about monkeys.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The New York Korean Film Festival. All films are in Korean. Aug. 30 at 6:50: "Water Mill" (1966, Lee Man-hee). ♦ Aug. 30 at 9:15: "The Devil's Stairway" (1964, Lee). ♦ Aug. 31 at 6:50: "A Road to Return" (1966, Lee). ♦ Aug. 31 at 9:15: "A Way to Sampo" (1975, Lee). ♦ Sept. 1 at 7: "The Charming Girl" (2005, Lee Yoon-ki). ♦ Sept. 1 at 9:30: "My Scary Girl" (2006, Son Jae-gon). ♦ Sept. 2 at 4: "Forbidden Quest" (2006, Kim Dae-Woo). ♦ Sept. 2 at 7: "Rules of Dating" (2005, Han Jae-rim). ♦ Sept. 2 at 9:30: "Robotech" (2006, Tommy Yune and Dong-Wook Lee). ♦ Sept. 3 at 4: "Wedding Campaign" (2005, Hwang Byung-guk). ♦ Sept. 3 at 7: "Grain in Ear" (2005, Jang Ryul). ♦ Sept. 3 at 9:30: "The Aggressives!" (2005, Jeong Jae-eun). ♦ "Labor Day Special Film." Sept. 4-5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "La Tropical" (2002, David Turnley).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Frank Tashlin. Aug. 30-31 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "The Girl Can't Help It" (1956). ♦ Sept. 1-2 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" (1957). ♦ Sept. 3 at 1:30, 5:15, and 9: "Hollywood or Bust" (1956). ♦ Sept. 3 at 3:25 and 7:10: "Son of Paleface" (1952). ♦ Sept. 5 at 1:20, 5:10, and 9: "The Lieutenant Wore Skirts" (1956). ♦ Sept. 5 at 3:20 and 7:10: "Bachelor Flat" (1962). ♦ Through Sept. 25: The films of Buster Keaton. All films are silent. Sept. 4 at 2, 4:50, 7:30, and 10:10: "College" (†). ♦ Sept. 4 at 3:25, 6:15, and 8:55: "The Love Nest" (1923), "The Scarecrow" (1920), and "The Goat" (1921).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Sept. 1-3: "Grey Gardens" (1975, Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles, and Muffie Meyer). ♦ The films of Akira Kurosawa. Sept. 1-4 at noon: "The Hidden Fortress" (1958; in Japanese).

LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS
Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280)—The films of Pedro Almodóvar. Call for show times. Aug. 30-31: "All About My Mother" (1999; in Spanish, Catalan, and English). ♦ Sept. 1-5: "Talk to Her" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)— Through Sept. 22: "The Huston Family: 75 Years on Film." Aug. 30 at 6: "A Walk with Love and Death" (1969, John Huston). ♦ Aug. 30 at 8:15: "The Royal Tenenbaums" (2001, Wes Anderson). ♦ Aug. 31 at 6:30: "Abraham Lincoln" (†). ♦ Aug. 31 at 8:30: "The Shanghai Gesture" (1941, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Sept. 1 at 4:30: "Dodsworth" (1936, William Wyler). ♦ Sept. 1 at 6:30: "The Maltese Falcon" (1941, John Huston). ♦ Sept. 1 at 8:30: "Chinatown" (1974, Roman Polanski). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2: "Swamp Water" (1941, Jean Renoir). ♦ Sept. 2 at 4:15: "And Then There Were None" (1945, René Clair). ♦ Sept. 2 at 6:45: "The Great Sinner" (1949, Robert Siodmak). ♦ Sept. 3 at 1:30: "Mr. North" (1988, Danny Huston). ♦ Sept. 3 at 3:30: "The Grifters" (1990, Stephen Frears). ♦ Sept. 3 at 6: "Prizzi's Honor" (†). ♦ Sept. 4 at 1:30: "Key Largo" (1948, John Huston). ♦ Sept. 4 at 3:30: "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (1948, John Huston). ♦ Sept. 4 at 6: "Moulin Rouge" (1952, John Huston). ♦ Through Sept. 16: "Another Wave: Global Queer Cinema, Part

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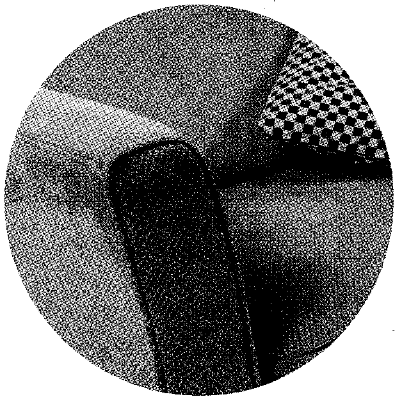

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Two." Sept. 1 at 6 and Sept. 4 at 2: "I Like You, I Like You Very Much" (1994, Hiroyuki Oki; in Japanese). ♦ Sept. 1 at 7:45 and Sept. 2 at 4: "Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia" (1989, Ulrike Ottinger; in German). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2 and Sept. 3 at 4:30: "Woubi Cheri" (1998, Philip Brooks and Laurent Bocahut; in French). ♦ Sept. 2 at 7:30 and Sept. 3 at 6:30: "Sea in the Blood" (2000, Richard Fung) and short films. ♦ Sept. 3 at 1:30: "Madame Satã" (2002, Karim Ainouz; in Portuguese). ♦ Sept. 4 at 4: "The Old Testament" (2002, Cui Zi'en; in Mandarin). ♦ "Dada on Film." Sept. 4 at 6: Short-film program, including "Emak Bakia" (1926, Man Ray; silent).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—The films of Mary Pickford. Sept. 2-3 at 1:30: "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall" (1924, Marshall Neilan; silent). ♦ Sept. 2-3 at 4:30: "Sparrows" (†). ♦ "Repertory Nights." Sept. 2-3 at 6:30: "Murmur of the Heart" (1971, Louis Malle; in French).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In revival. Aug. 30 at 7:15: "Pickpocket" (1959, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Sept. 4 at 7: "Underworld, U.S.A." (1961, Samuel Fuller). ♦ Sept. 4 at 9: "Human Desire" (1954, Fritz Lang). ♦ "Vloggers Unite!" Aug. 31 at 9: "Date Number One" (2006, Sujewa Ekanayake).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Sept. 1-3: "Jaws" (1975, Steven Spielberg).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. Sept. 3 and Sept. 5 at 4:30: "The Quiet Man" (1952, John Ford). ♦ Sept. 3 and Sept. 5 at 7: "How Green Was My Valley" (1941, Ford).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The films of Judy Holliday. Aug. 30 at 2 and 6:15: "The Marrying Kind" (1952, George Cukor). The 6:15 screening will be introduced by Lee Israel. ♦ Aug. 30 at 4:15: "It Should Happen to You" (1954, Cukor). ♦ Aug. 30 at 8:20 and Aug. 31 at 4:15: "Full of Life" (1956, Richard Quine). ♦ Aug. 31 at 2 and 8:15: "Solid Gold Cadillac" (1956, Quine). ♦ Aug. 31 at 6:15: "Phffft!" (†). ♦ In revival. Sept. 1-4 at 12, 4, and 8 and Sept. 5 at 4 and 8: "Sholay" (1975, Ramesh Sippy; in Hindi).

READINGS AND TALKS

JASON SOKOL

Sokol, a young historian, reads from his début book, "There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975." (BookCourt, 163 Court St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. Aug. 31 at 8.)

PENNY COLEMAN

The writer, whose first husband was a Vietnam veteran who killed himself, reads from her latest book, "Flashback: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide, and the Lessons of War." (McNally Robinson Booksellers, 50 Prince St. No tickets necessary. Sept. 5 at 7.)

JOHN CAGE BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

Dancers, poets, musicians, singers, artists, and other friends of the late composer read from his work, abiding by a four-minute-and-thirty-three-second time limit. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. Sept. 5 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"WORLD'S TALLEST TAILGATE PARTY"

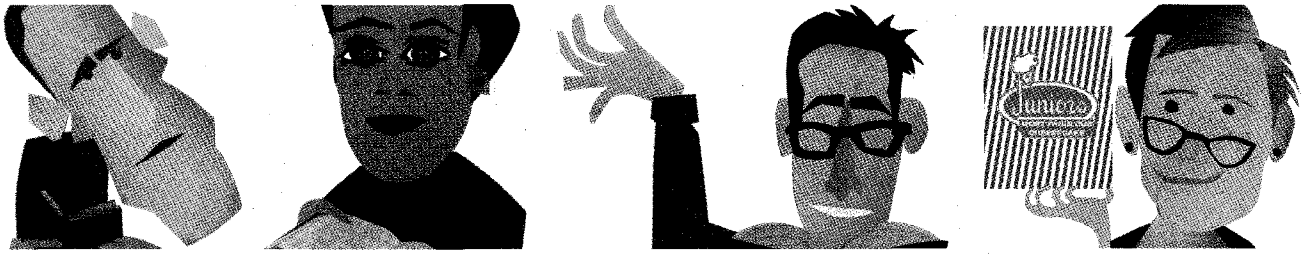
Jets fans didn't get a new West Side stadium last year, but they will have a fine spot to warm up for the new season. The Top of the Rock observation deck, at Rockefeller Center, is hosting a party featuring dedicated Gang Green tailgaters, who will be outfitted with new barbecue grills the afternoon of the final preseason game of the summer, against the Philadelphia Eagles. The Jets themselves may be preparing for a Super Bowl bid, but these culinary fans will be competing for best tailgate chef. (50th St. between Fifth and Sixth Aves. For more information, call 212-698-2000. Sept. 1, starting at noon.)

TUGBOAT CHALLENGE

The powerful little helpers that coax giant oceangoing vessels into their berths and haul barges of fuel oil and other necessities around the harbor get a moment in the spotlight. The festivities start with a parade of tugs in the Hudson, from Pier 63 Maritime, at 23rd St., to Pier 86, at 46th St. It will be followed by a race back downtown, where there will be bow-to-bow pushing contests and other tests of captains' skill and workboat proficiency. (Sept. 3, starting at noon. For more information, visit www.workingharbor.org.)

WEST INDIAN AMERICAN DAY PARADE

Carnival comes to Eastern Parkway, in Brooklyn, on Sept. 4, starting at 10:30 A.M. (For more information, call 718-467-1797, or visit www.wiadca.org.)



STEPHEN KRONINGER

ON THE HORIZON

READINGS AND TALKS
AFTER WHITMAN
Sept. 16

The inaugural Brooklyn Book Festival draws Paula Fox, Jonathan Lethem, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rick Moody, and other authors from Kings County for readings, talks, and other events at Brooklyn's Borough Hall. (www.brooklynbookfestival.org.)

THE THEATRE
SINGULAR SENSATION
Sept. 18

"A Chorus Line" was developed at the Public Theatre by Joseph Papp and Michael Bennett in 1975 and went on to Broadway, where it won nine Tonys and a Pulitzer Prize and played for more than fifteen years. A revival of the musical, in which twenty-four hopefuls vie for eight spots in the chorus of a Broadway show, begins previews at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre. (212-239-6200.)

ART
A LONG VIEW
Sept. 19-Oct. 27

Anish Kapoor's three-story-high concave lens in polished stainless steel, titled "Sky Mirror," will invert and warp the views around Rockefeller Center during its six-week installation this fall. (www.publicartfund.org.)

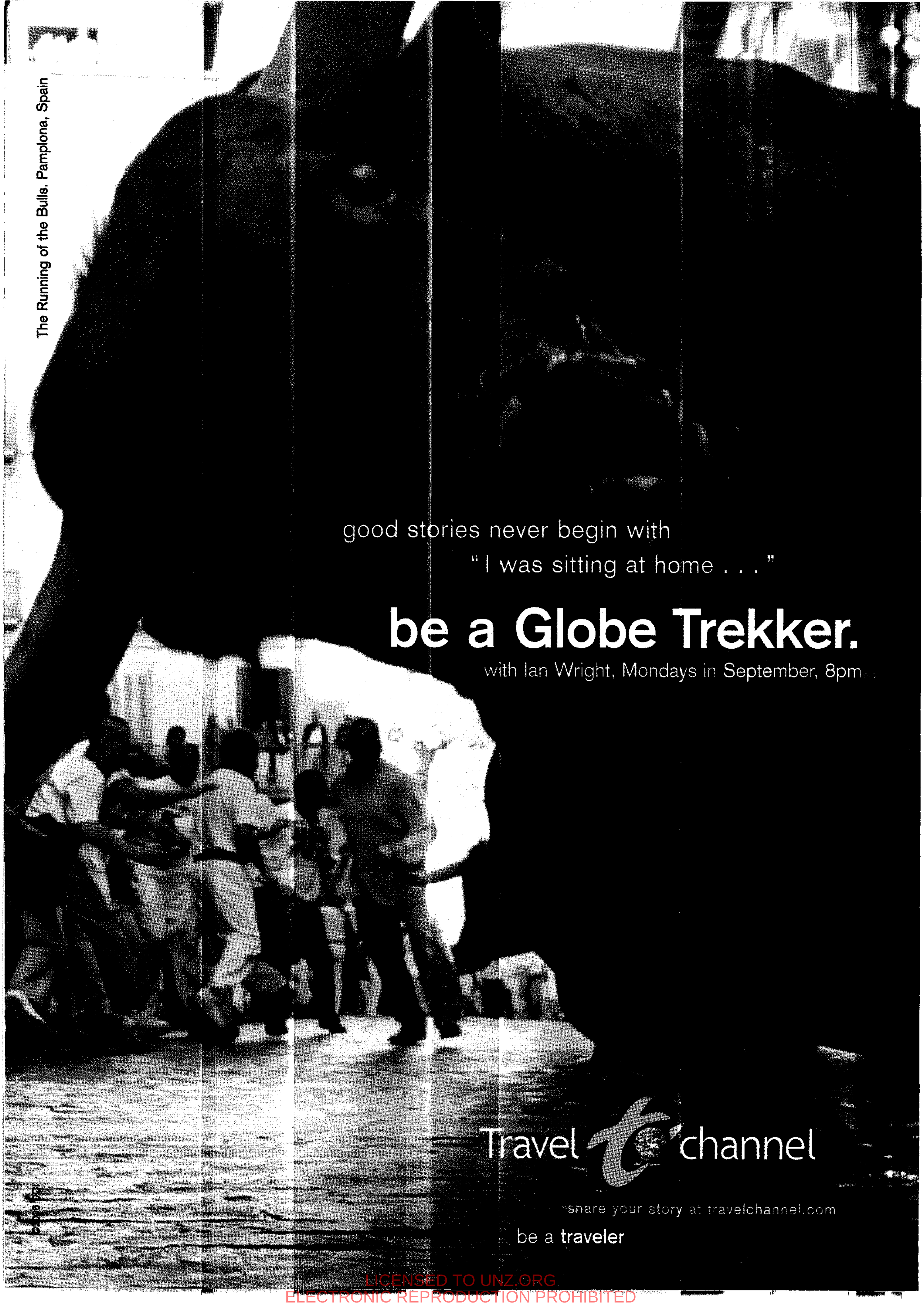
CLASSICAL MUSIC
TASTER'S CHOICE
Sept. 21

The ambitious and wide-ranging new season of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—the first planned by the Society's new directors, David Finckel and Wu Han—begins with a selection of works by Vivaldi, Brahms, Debussy, Bliss, and Bright Sheng. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)

MOVIES
CRÈME DE LA CRÈME
Sept. 30-Oct. 27

Janus Films, founded in the nineteen-fifties, has played a crucial role in bringing the best of world cinema to American audiences. Walter Reade Theatre is offering a month of treasures from the Janus catalogue, including "Day of Wrath," by Carl Theodor Dreyer, Bergman's "Monika," Mizoguchi's "Sansho the Bailiff," and Jean Renoir's "Rules of the Game." (212-875-5600.)

The Brooklyn Book Festival celebrates the literary borough.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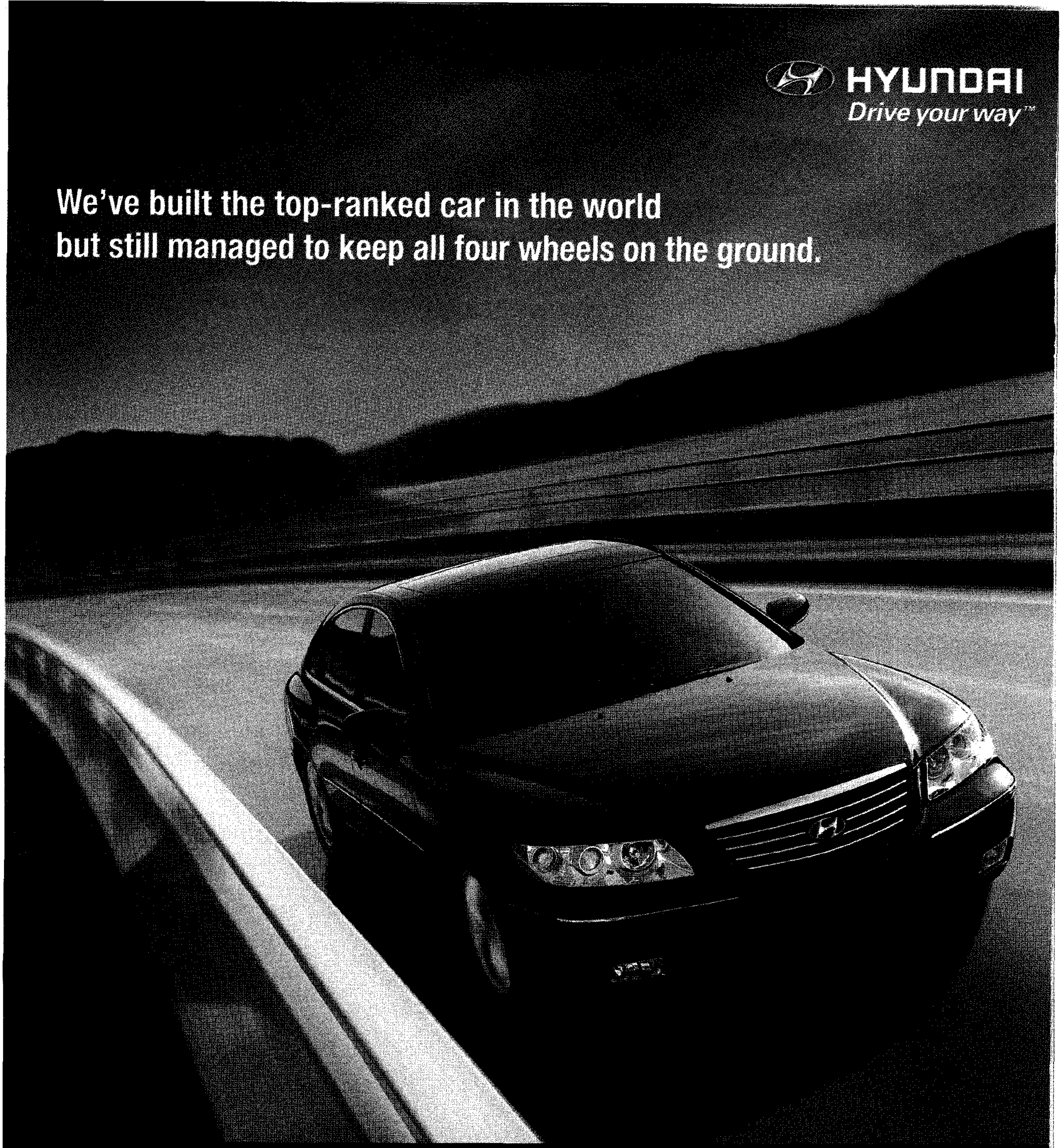
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
NO MERCY

In 1925, a young American physicist was doing graduate work at Cambridge University, in England. He was depressed. He was fighting with his mother and had just broken up with his girlfriend. His strength was in theoretical physics, but he was being forced to sit in a laboratory making thin films of beryllium. In the fall of that year, he dosed an apple with noxious chemicals from the lab and put it on the desk of his tutor, Patrick Blackett. Blackett, luckily, didn't eat the apple. But school officials found out what happened, and arrived at a punishment: the student was to be put on probation and ordered to go to London for regular sessions with a psychiatrist.

Probation? These days, we routinely suspend or expel high-school students for doing infinitely less harmful things, like fighting or drinking or taking drugs—that is, for doing the kinds of things that teen-agers do. This past summer, Rhett Bomar, the starting quarterback for the University of Oklahoma Sooners, was cut from the team when he was found to have been "overpaid" (receiving wages for more hours than he worked, with the apparent complicity of his boss) at his job at a car dealership. Even in Oklahoma, people seemed to think that kicking someone off a football team for having cut a few corners on his job made perfect sense. This is the age of zero tolerance. Rules are rules. Students have to be held accountable for their actions. Institutions must signal their expectations firmly and unambiguously: every school principal and every college president, these days, reads from exactly the same script. What, then, of a student who gives his teacher a poisoned apple? Surely he ought to be expelled from school and sent before a judge.

Suppose you cared about the student, though, and had some idea of his situation and his potential. Would you feel the same way? You might. Trying to poison your tutor is no small infraction. Then again, you might decide, as the dons at Cambridge clearly did, that what had happened called for a measure of leniency. They knew that the student had never done anything like this before, and that he wasn't well. And they knew that to file charges would almost certainly ruin his career. Cambridge wasn't sure that the benefits of enforcing the law, in this case, were greater than the benefits of allowing the offender an unimpeded future.

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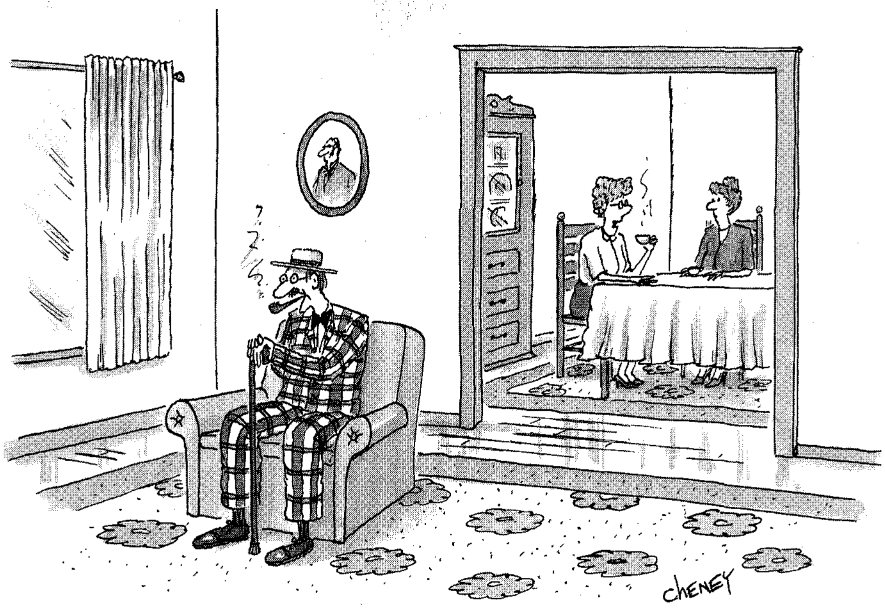
Schools, historically, have been home to this kind of discretionary justice. You let the principal or the teacher decide what to do about cheating because you know that every case of cheating is different—and, more to the point, that every cheater is different. Jimmy is incorrigible, and needs the shock of expulsion. But Bobby just needs a talking to, because he's a decent kid, and Mary and Jane cheated because the teacher foolishly stepped out of the classroom in the middle of the test, and the temptation was simply too much. A Tennessee study found that after zero-tolerance programs were adopted by the state's public schools the frequency of targeted offenses soared: the firm and unambiguous punishments weren't deterring bad behavior at all. Is that really a surprise? If you're a teen-ager, the announcement that an act will be sternly punished doesn't always sink in, and it isn't always obvious when you're doing the thing you aren't supposed to be doing. Why? Because you're a teen-ager.

Somewhere along the way—per-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"I found out I could get seven grand for him on 'Antiques Roadshow.'"

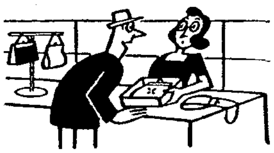
• •

haps in response to Columbine—we forgot the value of discretion in disciplining the young. "Ultimately, they have to make right decisions," the Oklahoma football coach, Bob Stoops, said of his players, after jettisoning his quarterback. "When they do not, the consequences are serious." Open and shut: he sounded as if he were talking about a senior executive of Enron, rather than a college sophomore whose primary obligation at Oklahoma was to throw a football in the direction of young men in helmets. You might think that if the University of Oklahoma was so touchy about its quarterback being "overpaid" it ought to have kept closer track of his work habits with an on-campus job. But making a fetish of personal accountability conveniently removes the need for institutional accountability. (We court-martial the grunts who abuse prisoners, not the commanding officers who let the abuse happen.) To acknowledge that the causes of our actions are complex and muddy seems permissive, and permissiveness is the hallmark of an ideology now firmly in disgrace. That conservative patron saint Whittaker Chambers once defined liberalism as Christ without the Crucifixion. But punishment without the possibility of redemption is worse: it is the Crucifixion without Christ.

As for the student whose career Cambridge saved? He left at the end of the academic year and went to study at the University of Göttingen, where he made important contributions to quantum theory. Later, after a brilliant academic career, he was entrusted with leading one of the most critical and morally charged projects in the history of science. His name was Robert Oppenheimer.

—*Malcolm Gladwell*

GOOD FENCES DEPT.
POACHED



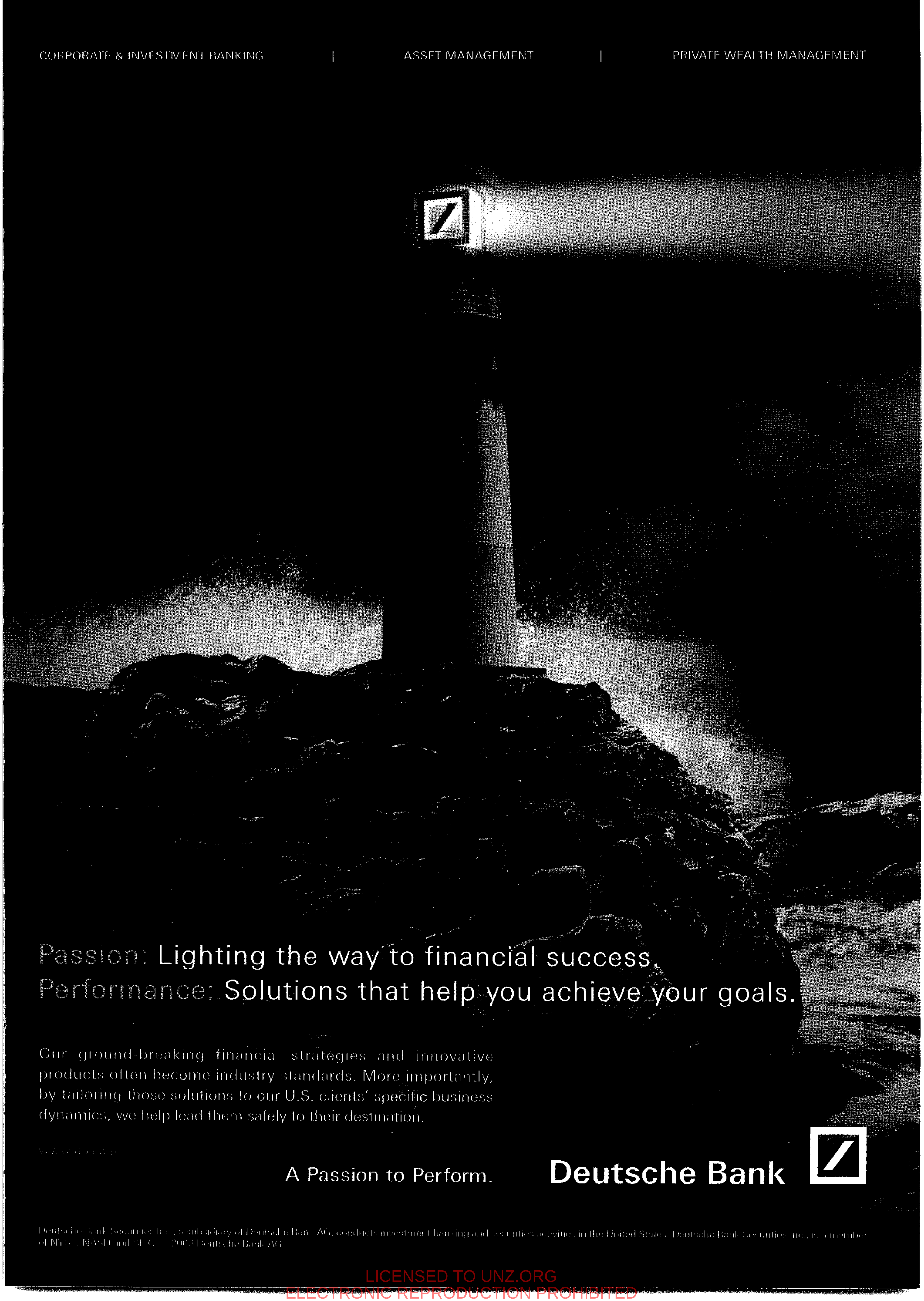
A decent midtown lunch spot—not the expense-account sort but a good, clean sandwich shop, with a fresh salad bar, and maybe some seafood tom yum, if that's your thing—can be hard to come by. Once you find one, you tend to stick with it. You learn the hourly cycles, in terms of both customer flow (twelve-forty-five equals chaos) and servers' shifts, and you begin to time your visits accordingly. You avoid the guy at the soup station who holds up the line by flirting with all the girls, and you always pick the front-most register, where the cheerful woman moves everyone along with unflagging efficiency. For the staff at Paul Stuart, the tweedy clothier on East Forty-fifth Street, from the president and the salespeople to Myra, the seventy-eight-year-old receptionist, that trusted lunch spot is Dishes, a sleek, vaguely Asian-themed cafeteria that's conveniently situated next door.

For years, the Paul Stuart employees were especially charmed by a couple of Dishes cashiers named Avalon and Salma. Then, last fall, a position opened up at one of the downstairs registers at Paul Stuart. Someone in-house recommended Avalon. She applied, and got the job. A few months later, another opening, and Salma was hired. "Same capacity, different environment," Craig Smith, an assistant director of human resources at Paul Stuart, said recently. (Smith left the company last week.) "It was a smooth transition for both of them, seeing that they already knew everybody. I didn't even need to give them a tour." Avalon and Salma turned out to be as good at ringing up paisley socks as they'd been at selling tuna wraps to secretaries.

At Paul Stuart, the personnel sharing seemed a natural extension of the neighborly rapport that had long existed between the two stores. "I mean, we went to their Christmas party," Smith said. "That's how tight the two crews are. We left our Christmas party and went over to theirs, which was more happening." (Paul Stuart, he said, tends to be "low-key," whereas the Dishes environment is "off the wall.")

To Moshe Mallul, the co-owner of Dishes, Paul Stuart's behavior seemed less that of a friendly neighbor than that of an entitled big brother, or even a hostile act of industrial espionage. He suspected poaching. "After Salma left," Mallul said, "I thought, Maybe it's a trend. They were among the stars over here—the best twenty per cent." (Smith, for his part, likened the two women to Superman and Michael Jordan.) Mallul let it be known that his restaurant was not a farm team for the benefit of Paul Stuart recruiters, and the relationship quickly cooled. Lunch hour ceased to be so pleasant.

"Oh, my gosh, it got blown out of proportion," Smith said, characterizing



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the fallout as a "Hatfield-McCoy thing." Détente eventually arrived in the form of a promise from Clifford Grodd, the president of Paul Stuart, to look beyond Forty-fifth Street for his future staffing needs. "Everything has subsided, because Mr. Grodd gave his personal guarantee, and the owner of Dishes gave his permission: 'You all can eat here again,' " Smith said. "Everyone loves Dishes."

Still, Smith couldn't help thinking that his shop was the more desirable workplace. "I don't know how much they make over there, but if it's apples to apples there's no comparison," he said. "This is vacation here, man."

"You never know," Mallul said, about the prospect of plucking a future soup ladler from amid the menswear racks. "Maybe somebody would like the faster pace rather than fall asleep or get bored over there."

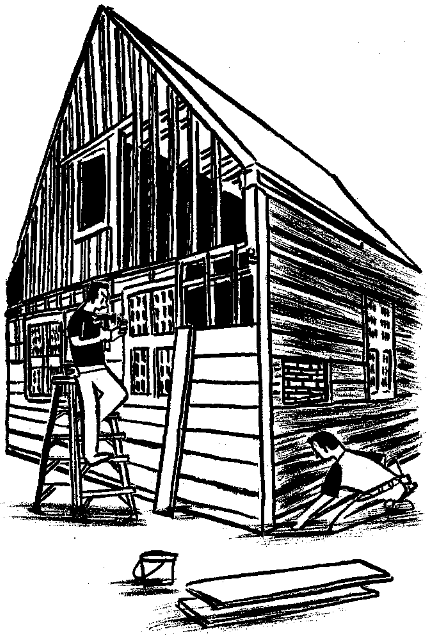
Time heals old wounds, in any case. The other day, a potential customer walked into Paul Stuart and asked for Salma. "She's next door," a greeter said. Next door, as in . . . at Dishes? Sure enough, Mallul recently heard that Salma, who's been working weekends at Paul Stuart, was looking for a full-time weekday gig. He offered to give her her old job back, and now she's working double-duty. The would-be customer headed over to Dishes and again asked for Salma. She said hello, smiled briefly, and then turned away to face the long line of customers. It was just past 1 P.M., and the place was bustling.

—*Ben McGrath*

DEEDS
THIS OLD HOUSE

In 1676 or so, a Dutch settler named Jan Martense Schenck built a house on the south shore of Long Island, in an area that in those days consisted mainly of sweeping meadows, tidal wetlands, and sand dunes, and which today is part of the Mill Basin neighborhood of Flatlands, in Brooklyn.

Schenck (pronounced "Skenk") left the house to his eldest son, who left it to his eldest son, who left it to his children, who sold it to others, who expanded it, remodelled it, heated it, plumbed it, neglected it, and so forth. In the early nineteen-hundreds, the house was turned over to the Atlantic, Gulf & Pacific Company, as payment for filling in some nearby streams and salt marshes. In 1941, a real-estate developer reproduced the house in a suburban subdivision in Port Washington, at an advertised price of $10,990. In 1952, A.G.&P. gave the house—by then it had an address, 2133 East Sixty-third Street—to the Brooklyn Museum, which hired a contractor to dismantle the structure and remove it from the original site. The pieces were numbered with bright-orange paint and stored, for a decade, under what was then the Interborough Parkway. In 1963 and 1964, the museum reassembled the pieces inside a large gallery on the fourth floor, and the house became a favorite destination of boisterous third graders studying the olden days.



Schenck house

A couple of years ago, the museum—which needed to make room for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art—decided to move the Schenck house to a different location on the same floor. Its conservators called James Boorstein, whose company, Traditional Line, does complex architectural restorations, and has developed a sideline in assembling, disassembling, and transporting tricky museum exhibits. (The Met, which is renovating its Islamic-art galleries, recently hired Boorstein to survey its Nur al-Din Room in preparation for a planned move.) Moving the Schenck house involved, among many other things, using thin wooden wedges and building jacks to pry apart timbers that were living trees when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. The job took five months.

Boorstein, who is fifty-one years old, has wavy dark-brown hair with only a few small patches of gray in it. He was born in Manhattan and reared on Long Island, and over the years he has acquired a staggering quantity of information about things like seventeenth-century window glass, eighteenth-century ceiling paint, and nineteenth-century mother-of-pearl annunciator buttons. "The Schenck house was moved once before," he said recently. "Or, actually, it was rotated about forty-five degrees in the original gallery, probably to make room for more exhibits." No detailed account of that move exists, but museum legend has it that the house was slid on bars of Ivory soap. Boorstein, after studying some violently splintered joists on the underside of a plywood platform on which the exhibit used to stand, deduced the following possible scenario: museum personnel first tried to roll the house on inch-thick steel cables, then ran afoul of some conduit stubs sticking up from the floor; next, thoroughly exasperated, they cut the top off the roof, jacked the entire structure a foot above the floor, and turned it until they had pressed it as tight as they could against an inconvenient steel column.

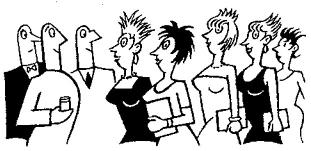
Back in 1963, very little of the original Schenck house remained, other than its massive timber frame. More or less arbitrarily, the conservators at the time chose 1730 as the interpretation date for their restoration, and they studied old Dutch paintings and buildings to get ideas about interior and exterior treatments, appropriate furnishings, and other details. Boorstein's job, four decades later, was not to reinterpret their mid-twentieth-century conception of a hypothetical early-eighteenth-century incarnation of a late-seventeenth-century house but to use early-twenty-first-century technology to meticulously reproduce it. He also made an exhaustive record of everything he did, for curators of the future.

In its new gallery, the Jan Martense Schenck house sits just fifteen inches from the Nicholas Schenck house, which was built by one of Jan's grandsons. The Nicholas Schenck house was installed in the museum in 1929. It looks more ancient than the Jan Martense Schenck house—it is covered with very old, very dark cedar shingles—but is actually a century younger, a fact that strains the explanatory stamina of third-grade teachers.

The reopening of the Schenck exhibits is scheduled for next summer, and there is still much to be done. The Jan Martense Schenck house is missing most of its furniture, and it needs a fresh coat of exterior paint, the color of which has yet to be decided. Core samples have been taken from beams in both houses, so that they can be dated precisely by a dendrochronologist. For the time being, both houses mainly sit in the dark, gathering dust, awaiting their next big moment in history.

—*David Owen*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA
CRASHING QUEENS



Most event planners, when they're throwing a party to publicize something, follow a few unspoken rules. These usually preclude the scheduling of such an event for a Saturday night, in summer, in Queens. But, supposing that there is some reason for the celebration to be held in the heat, in Queens—if, say, it's a book party for a guide to the borough—it would seem particularly bad karma for it to take place on the night of a home game at Shea.

The "Not for Tourists Guide to Queens" is the tenth in a series of small black almanacs for people who don't want to be seen carrying a guidebook. Despite the ballgame, and the fact that the volume's title is arguably redundant, and that its publishers were promoting it as the first and only guide devoted exclusively to the borough (it isn't), several hundred people showed up at the SculptureCenter, in Long Island City. Jane Pirone and Rob Tallia, the founders of the N.F.T. series, were manning a keg of Red Hook E.S.B. "We started very Manhattan-centric," Pirone said. "And then we realized, O.K., we don't know anybody who lives in Manhattan anymore. Everybody lives in Brooklyn. So we did a Brooklyn guide. And, the minute we did a Brooklyn guide, everybody started saying, 'Where's Queens? Where's Queens?' "

TALLIA (*struggling with the pump*): We're never doing the Bronx, and we're never doing Staten Island.

PIRONE: We said that about Queens! We've already started getting asked for the Bronx guide now. The one we really will not do is Staten Island. There's just nothing there.

The partygoers sprawled across the SculptureCenter's gravel courtyard, picking at pieces of fruit and cheese. Many of them hailed from Manhattan or, disproportionately, from the newly trendy Brooklyn neighborhood of Greenpoint, just across the Pulaski Bridge. Michael Sendrow, a twenty-nine-year-old Sunnyside resident (and brother-in-law of one of the guide's editors), gave a possible explanation for the party's inter-borough popularity. "It was posted on Myopenbar," he said. (Myopenbar.com is "your guide to free booze" in New York. "Queens is full of good shit," the site's notice for the N.F.T. party had said. "The Astoria pool, Indian gold by the pound, men with mustaches, strip joints . . .") "Terrible," someone chimed in. "I'm telling you: they're all hipsters, here for the free beer. Cheats."

Insofar as other Queens residents could be found, they, too, were wary of outside interest in their borough. Bryan Kimpel, a lifelong Astorian, confided his concern that Queens was on the verge of an invasion by exiles from pricier parts of the city. "I was just telling some of my friends about Water Taxi Beach, and then I was going, 'Oh, jeez, I better not tell too many people.' Because we'll have to wait in line." Cathy Albright, the one local who expressed unqualified enthusiasm for the guide, had moved, just a year earlier, to Astoria from Texas. "I've been waiting for the Queens edition to come out," she said, clutching her complimentary copy. "The addresses are so screwy here."

At a hundred and fifteen pages (not including foldout map and street index), the guide is not encyclopedic. Whole neighborhoods (Maspeth, Middle Village) have been omitted. Other neighborhoods are described in less than fulsome terms. Regarding Flushing: "A center of Queens transportation . . . The blossoming Asian communities are another reason to spend some time in the birth city of Nancy Reagan." Or a public park: "Located behind a Wendy's and Burger King, Oakland Lake isn't exactly the great outdoors (local lore holds that there may be more bodies than bass in the lake), but fishing is allowed nonetheless." One might conclude that the volume's writers—current or former Queens residents, per N.F.T. policy—are bad actors, downplaying their borough's charms in an effort not to see their rents go up.

The liveliest sections of the guide are those on getting to and, crucially, from the borough. The section on transportation includes a comprehensive review, written by a taxi-driver, of roadways and various East River crossings. The Jackie Robinson Parkway, it declares, is "probably the least useful highway in all of Queens. It runs between one neighborhood in Brooklyn you don't want to be in . . . and another neighborhood in Queens you don't want to be in." On the other hand: "The Queens-Midtown Tunnel is almost always worth the $4.50." (Funny, that a cabdriver would write that.)

By eight, the party was winding down. Revellers had begun spilling out onto Jackson Avenue, some in search of the E, G, and 7 trains, others in the general direction of the nearby L.I.C. Bar. A dozen more loitered on the sidewalk in front of the SculptureCenter, apparently uncertain of their next move. Sendrow said, "I imagine that these people, who probably don't know where they're going, get a Queens guide and have to look at it in order to get back to wherever they're from."

—*Kate Julian*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
DEALER'S CHOICE

When General Motors was the biggest and most profitable auto manufacturer in the world, its strategy was to provide "a car for every purse and purpose." G.M. offered a panoply of distinctive brands, each targeted at a particular category of buyer—Buick for the successful but conservative driver, Cadillac for the wealthier and more flamboyant, and so on. This was a tremendously successful strategy in the days when G.M.'s domination was unchallenged. But now, with G.M. losing billions of dollars a year and struggling to restructure, it just looks like a waste of time and money. When analysts talk about how to turn G.M. around, most start with the need to slim down the company and get rid of less popular brands. (Buick and Pontiac are perennial nominees.) It's an eminently sensible approach, but it's unlikely to happen anytime soon, because it would challenge the interests of some of the most powerful players in today's auto industry—car dealers.

Car dealers, with their low-production-value TV commercials and glad-handing tactics, seem like the archetypal small businessmen, and it's hard to believe that they could sway the decisions of global corporations like G.M. and Ford. But, collectively, they have enormous leverage. Dealers are not employees of the car companies—they own local franchises, which, in every state, are protected by so-called "franchise laws." These laws do things like restrict G.M.'s freedom to open a new Cadillac dealership a few miles away from an old one. More important, they also make it nearly impossible for an auto manufacturer to simply shut down a dealership. If G.M. decided to get rid of Pontiac and Buick, it couldn't just go to those dealers and say, "Nice doing business with you." It would have to get them to agree to close up shop, which in practice would mean buying them out. When, a few years ago, G.M. actually did eliminate one of its brands, Oldsmobile, it had to shell out around a billion dollars to pay dealers off—and it still ended up defending itself in court against myriad lawsuits. As a result, dropping a brand may very well cost more than it saves, since it's the dealers who end up with a hefty chunk of the intended savings.

You'd think that what's bad for G.M. would also be bad for the people who sell its cars. But G.M. makes money (when it does) on new cars and on the financing of loans. Dealers, by contrast, make most of their money on servicing old cars and selling used ones. So dealers can thrive even when the automaker languishes. And at the state level they often have more political influence than automakers do. In the late nineties, for instance, local dealers were challenged by companies that wanted to sell cars over the Internet. In response, some states, including Texas, actually passed laws making it illegal to have a business selling cars online (unless you already owned a local dealership), and regulators told Internet companies to cease and desist. When Ford itself started experimenting with online sales, dealers' vigorous objections (along with legal challenges) caused the manufacturers to quickly retreat.

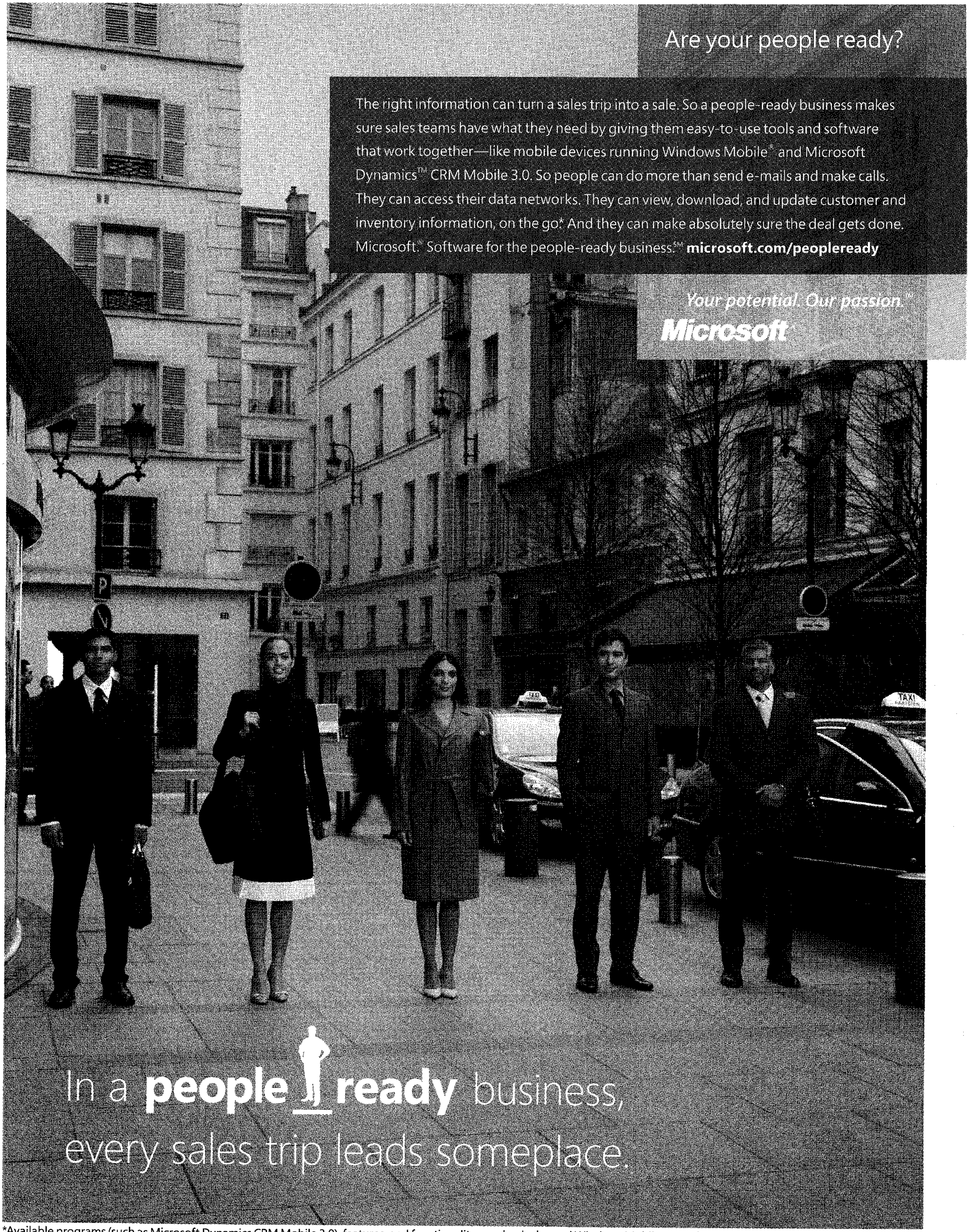
If automakers sometimes find dealers difficult to do business with, it's entirely their own fault. Why, after all, have Ford and G.M. always sold their cars through independent dealers? They could have owned the dealerships themselves, with the salesmen being employees, much as Starbucks does today with its stores. Instead, they preferred to give dealers franchises, and work with them as partners. And, historically, the automakers were not good partners. In 1920, for instance, the U.S. economy went into a deep recession. But Henry Ford kept his factories running at full tilt, and forced thousands of Ford dealers around the country to buy new cars that they had little chance of selling. The dealers knew that if they said no they'd never see a Model T again, so they ate the inventory. A decade later, when the Great Depression hit, Ford and G.M. used the same strategy to help keep the production lines going. They turned their dealers into a cushion against hard times.

In the long term, this was a disastrous tactic, because it inspired mistrustful dealers to look to the government for help. (The first franchise law was passed in 1937.) Dealers recognized that much about their businesses was always going to be out of their control—automakers not only decide what cars get made but also dictate sales strategies and incentive plans. So they decided to protect what they could, using laws to insulate themselves from competition and from the risk of being dropped by the manufacturer. And that's what has made life so hard for the automakers today.

The irony in all this is that G.M. and Ford adopted the dealer system because they thought it would make their lives easier. A dealer who owned his own business would work harder than a mere employee, the thinking went, and would not require a lot of outside monitoring. But the benefits that the car companies reaped from franchising cost them a lot in terms of control and flexibility. There are now many things that G.M. can't do (like shut down Buick) that it could do easily if it owned its own dealers. Car companies might like to change this—in the late nineties, both G.M. and Ford tried to start buying up dealerships. But, at this point, the system is self-protecting; dealers revolted, state regulators started nosing about, and the automakers gave up. They made a devil's bargain some eighty years ago, and now they're stuck with it. Call it the revenge of the middleman.

—James Surowiecki

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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LETTER FROM DURHAM

BIG MEN ON CAMPUS

The lacrosse furor and Duke's divided culture.

BY PETER J. BOYER

In the summer of 2003, a search committee from Duke University set out to find a successor to its departing president, Nannerl Keohane, and decided upon the dean of Yale College, Richard H. Brodhead. Duke had long striven for a place among the top tier of American universities, and selecting a new leader from among the "upper Ivies" affirmed Duke's arrival.

For Brodhead, though, the decision was the most difficult of his life. He had come to Yale from Andover in 1964, at the age of seventeen. After taking a degree in English literature, he had stayed on for his postgraduate work and a career in teaching. He had had offers from other schools over the years, including university presidencies, but New Haven held him fast. He was a gifted teacher; his English-literature courses were student favorites. Even after his move into Yale's administration, Brodhead remained so thoroughly the literature professor as to embody the type—shy, prone to a slight stammer, but speaking in long, elegantly formed passages, filled with literary allusion.

The man charged with bringing Brodhead to Duke was Robert K. Steel, a trustee and chairman of the search committee, who was a Duke graduate and a native of Durham, North Carolina, where Duke is situated. Steel, then a vice-chairman of Goldman Sachs, was a man of forceful personality and overflowing confidence, a driven achiever who liked having a clear goal. Steel knew how much his 1973 Duke degree had appreciated in value, and, regardless of what outsiders thought, he was convinced that Duke's destiny was to set its own standard. Steel and his committee vice-chair, the Duke law professor Sara Beale, met Brodhead at a small restaurant off Interstate 95 in Connecticut and put the school's case to him. Steel knew something about the Ivy League (he teaches a class at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government), and he believed that the rich and venerable old schools were a bit sclerotic. Duke was young and willing to take risks, and, as Steel would say, "We're in a hurry."

Steel talked to Brodhead about the ways in which Duke and Yale were similar—their size, the balance of teaching and research, their professional schools, and so on—and about one big difference: sports. Yale, with the rest of the Ivy League, had long ago given up big-time football, and competed in all sports with non-scholarship student athletes. Duke means to contend at a championship level in sports across the board, and to do so without compromising academic standards. It is an audacious proposition—only two other private institutions, Stanford and Northwestern, even try it—and the undertaking alone attests to Duke's vigor, and its idea of itself. Duke's basketball coach, Mike Krzyzewski, who is known on campus as Coach K and has won three national championships with smart, disciplined players, exemplified the ideal.

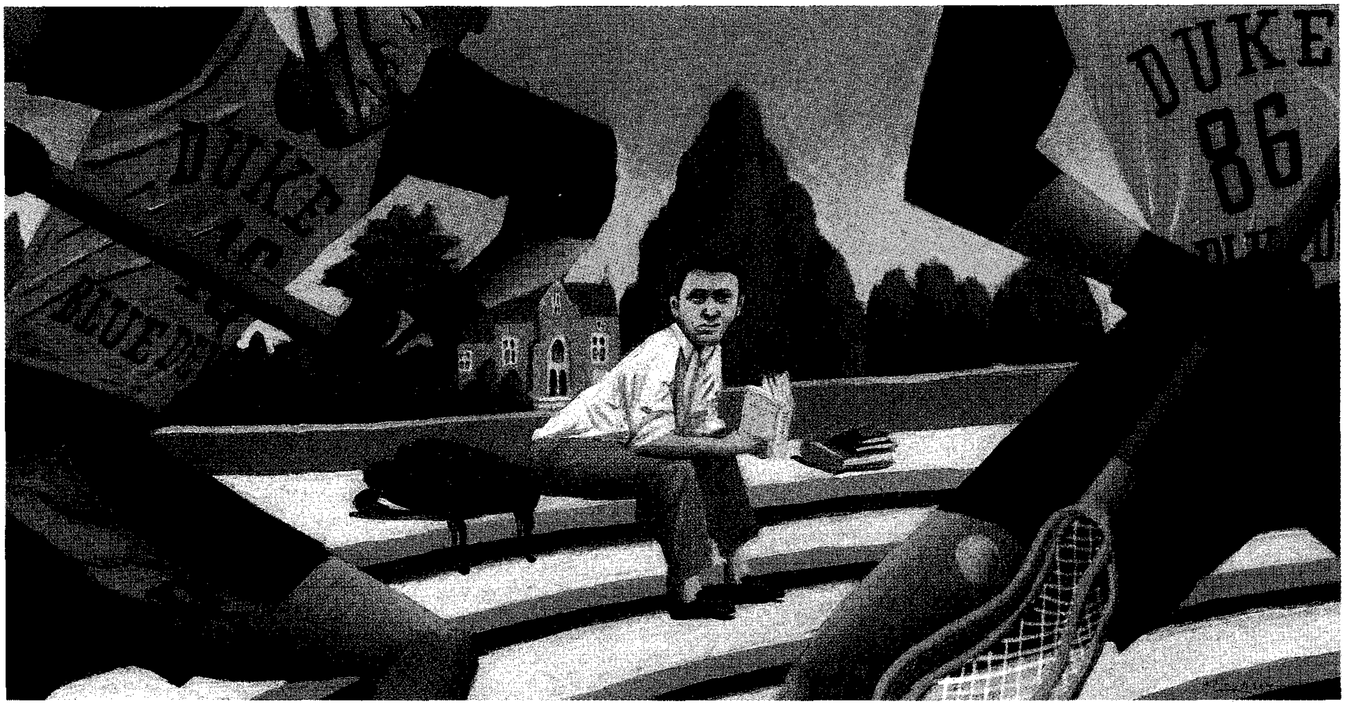
"Is that something you want to be part of?" Steel asked.

On June 28, 2004, Duke's ninth president moved into his new office, in the Allen Building, near the university's main quad. As Brodhead was getting settled, Joe Alleva, Duke's athletic director, rushed in with urgent news: the Los Angeles Lakers had offered Coach K the job of head coach, and Krzyzewski was thinking of leaving Duke.

After forty years in the academy, Brodhead, on his first day in the new job, was facing a crisis wholly foreign to him. But he understood that losing the star coach would be a disastrous beginning, and he took Krzyzewski to dinner and desperately sought common ground. There was no way that any school, even Duke, could compete monetarily with the N.B.A. (the Lakers had reportedly offered Krzyzewski forty million dollars), but Brodhead did have one edge: his status as an academic heavyweight. He told the coach how highly valued he was at Duke, not just for his winning but for his talents as a teacher, and if Krzyzewski stayed he would retain his auxiliary position as a "special assistant" to the president. As the days passed, Brodhead found himself joining the crowds of students chanting "Coach K, please stay!" and helping to fill a human chain forming the letter "K" outside Cameron Indoor Stadium. On July 4th, Krzyzewski made his decision: he would stay. But he waited until the next day to relieve the president of his agonies.

"What you saw there was the lay of the land," Orin Starn, a Duke professor who specializes in the anthropology of sports, recalls. "The fact is that it's the basketball coach, Coach K, who's the most powerful person at Duke, and in Durham, and maybe in North Carolina—much more powerful than the college president himself. So Brodhead—I mean, there was almost this kind of ritual humiliation, this ritual obeisance, or fealty, that was required of him." Whatever it was, Brodhead was plainly grateful for the outcome, and at the ensuing press conference he demonstrated that he had mastered the language, at least, of the Duke idea. Krzyzewski was a "great, great coach," Brodhead said, but he was equally valued by Duke as a molder of character, a truly serious person.

This July, two years after that ordeal, I visited Brodhead in his office. He told me that he had expected surprises in the job, but he could not have imagined that sports would have presented him with decisions of such gravity. As we spoke, three of Duke's lacrosse players, one of them a new graduate, stood accused of gang-raping a local woman who had been hired as a stripper for a team party in March. The event, and its aftermath, had cast into doubt the central tenet of the school's identity—the fragile balance between sports and scholarship. When I asked Brodhead how his experience at Duke has informed his thinking about the place of big-time athletics in the university, he cited Homer. "If you go back and read the Odyssey, who is Odysseus?" he asked. " 'Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story of that man skilled in all ways of contending.' And his ways of contending are intellectual, and they're strategic, and they're political, and they're athletic. And so it seems to me that that would actually be at the foundation of it—it's the image of excellence. I'm not saying that I would embrace athletics on any terms. But that's its relevance. And then you have to couch it in the right terms, to have it be consonant with the other values of the university. There are other things as well. It's about working in teams, about learning to do things together that people can't do alone. The metaphorical value of sports is actually quite deep, when you stop and think about it. Our culture doesn't ask us often enough to think about it."



Duke's commitment to athletic prowess sometimes sits uneasily alongside its more recent pursuit of academic excellence.

MARK ULRIKSEN

Just after 1:30 A.M. on Tuesday, March 14th, a Durham police sergeant named John Shelton, responding to a 911 dispatch, pulled into the parking lot of a Kroger supermarket, about a mile from the Duke campus, where, according to his report, he encountered a black woman slumped in the passenger seat of a dark-colored Honda. "She's just passed out drunk," Shelton concluded. He popped open a capsule of ammonia, waved it under the woman's nose, and tried pulling her from the car. The woman, rousing, grabbed hold of the car's emergency brake, but she lost her grip and tumbled out into the parking lot. The Honda's driver said that she had offered the woman a ride home, because she had seemed incapable of making it on her own. The subject had no identification. She was wearing a see-through red garment (with no underwear) and one white high-heeled shoe.

Shelton conferred with Officer Willie Barfield, who had just arrived. Without an address, the men couldn't take the woman home, and Shelton considered her to be too intoxicated for a twenty-four-hour lockup. He decided on a county facility called Durham Center Access, a sort of halfway house/emergency room that helped indigents through substance-abuse and psychological crises. At the Center, Barfield and another officer stood by as a staff nurse went through the standard screening process with the distressed woman, assessing her for risk of suicide, danger to others, substance abuse, and victimization.

The nurse asked the woman if anything had happened to her.

"Yes."

Had she been raped?

"Yes."

With that response, the woman became a dramatic archetype. In the coming hours and days, a series of narratives concerning her would be composed by cops, journalists, politicians, activists, lawyers, and by the woman herself.

Barfield called Sergeant Shelton and told him that the woman was saying that she had been raped inside a house at 610 North Buchanan Boulevard, near the Duke campus. Shelton knew the address. Earlier that night, he had been called to the Buchanan house on another 911 complaint: a woman reported that a young man at the house had shouted a racial epithet at her and her friend, a black woman. Shelton had gone to the site, a modest white clapboard house with empty cups and beer cans strewn about inside, but when he knocked on the door no one responded.

Shelton instructed Barfield to transport the woman to Duke University Hospital's emergency room, and he met them there. She told Shelton that she was a stripper who'd been hired, with another woman, to "put on a show" for a group of men at the Buchanan house. She said that she had been groped, but that no one forced her to have sex. She'd had an argument with the other stripper, she said, and someone had taken her money.

Shelton stepped outside and called the police station. He told his watch commander that the alleged rape victim had recanted. But within moments he got word that the woman was again claiming rape, prompting yet another call to the station.

Several cops from the Duke University police force were also in the emergency-room area that night, including an officer named Christopher Day, who had apparently been standing with Sergeant Shelton when he told his watch commander about the accuser's changing stories. His report of the incident reflected the prevailing view among the cops who had dealt with the woman: "The victim changed her story several times," Day wrote, "and eventually Durham Police stated that charges would not exceed misdemeanor simple assault against the occupants of 610 N. Buchanan."

When Robert Dean, the director of the Duke University police, read the overnight operations report, he did not find it unusual to see an incident from the neighborhood around North Buchanan Boulevard. The university had cracked down on alcohol on campus, and that had pushed students, and their keg parties, off campus, into rental homes. Duke had agreed to have its force help the Durham police in patrolling the areas near campus, and the school had just bought, for $3.7 million, several of the houses in the neighborhood—including 610 North Buchanan—with the intent of removing them from the student-rental pool.

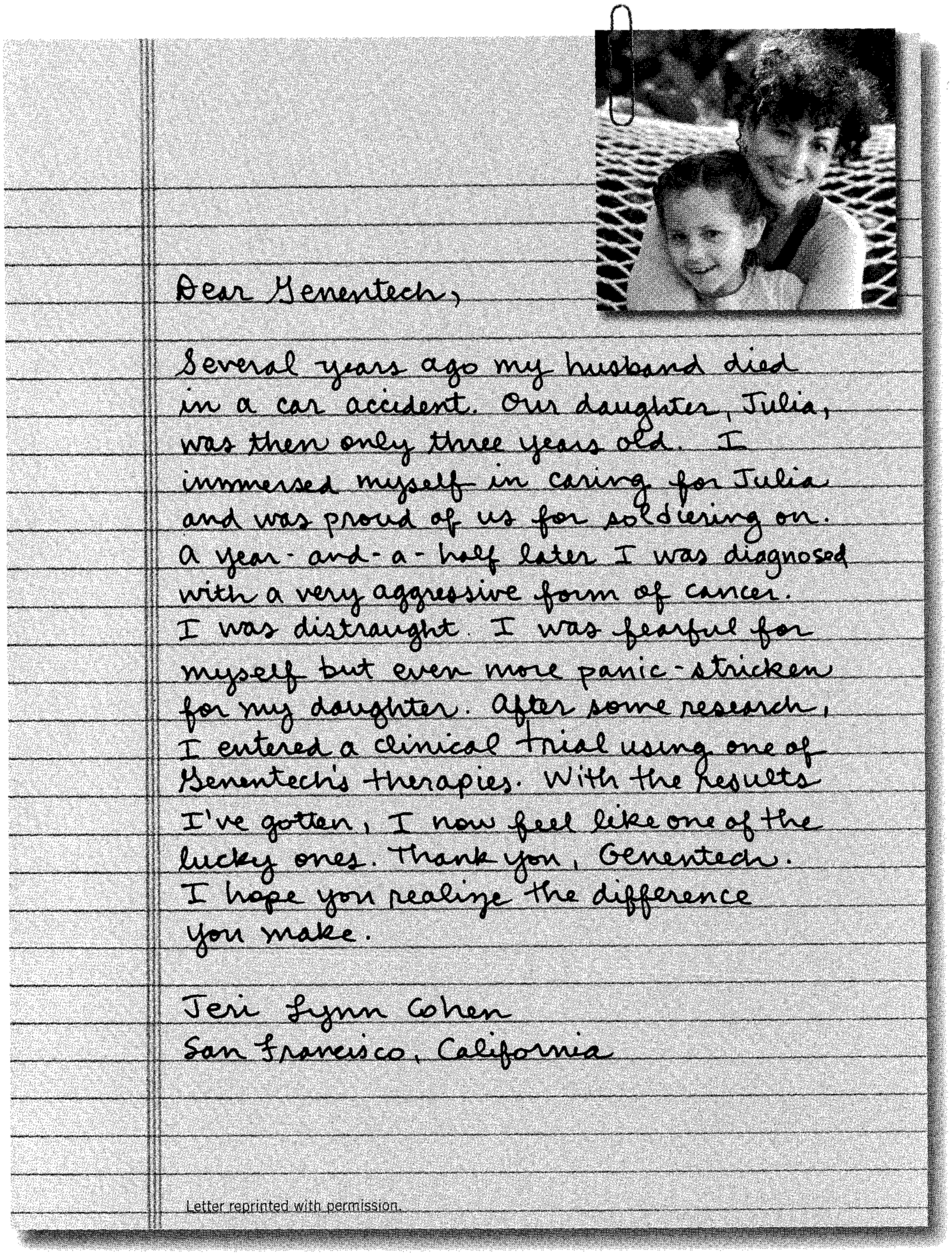
A sexual-assault claim was more than just another nuisance complaint. Dean called the dean of students, Sue Wasiolek, to inform her of it, and told her that the matter would likely blow over.

Wasiolek discovered that the residents of the house were members of the Duke lacrosse team. To any reasonably attuned school administrator at Duke, the term "lacrosse player" summoned a particular profile. In the order of the social universe of Duke undergraduates, the lacrosse players ranked at the top of the dominance hierarchy. They tended to be the children of white, prosperous families, products of northeastern preparatory schools, where the game is a fixture; after graduation most of them go on to lucrative careers in fields like finance. They were capable, if not overly serious, students, and necessarily well-disciplined athletes. They were also known as enthusiastically social creatures, partyers of the very highest order, and prodigious drinkers, even within a culture inclined to intemperance. In this regard, their marquee setting (in public, at least) was the Saturday-morning football-season event known as Tailgate, a quasi-sanctioned school function held in a parking lot before football games. The lacrosse boys, who stood out among the revellers, wore themed costumes—superheroes, cartoon characters, etc. Their effort at last season's final Tailgate was widely deemed their best, as it featured a foam pit that facilitated a measure of "Girls Gone Wild" abandon.

It was a reflection of the lacrosse team's station at Duke that, when the school decided, in 2005, that Tailgate needed to be reined in (many revellers never bothered to leave the party to attend the football game), administrators asked the lacrosse coach, Mike Pressler, for help. His solution was to ask his team to meet him fifteen minutes before kickoff time, and to proceed to the football stadium together—which they unfailingly did. In this regard, the lacrosse players exemplified the "work hard, play hard" Duke ideal. As it happened, Wasiolek, who likes to be called Dean Sue, was reasonably attuned to the team's place in the school's culture, having been among those who attended the foam party.

It was spring break at Duke, and the lacrosse players, because of their game schedule, were among the few students on campus the week of March 13th. On Wednesday, when Coach Pressler returned a call from Wasiolek, he was, characteristically, with his team, at a group outing at a local bowling alley. After hearing of the incident at the Buchanan house, he summoned his team captains—three of whom were residents at 610 North Buchanan—and asked them about the party. He then called Wasiolek back and put one of the captains, Dan Flannery, on the phone.

Flannery, a senior, had made the call (using the name Adam) to an escort service. He now told Wasiolek that he and his roommates had given a party, that there had been a good deal of drinking, and that they'd ordered two strippers for entertainment. When the women arrived, he said, one of them was incapacitated, and he supposed that she was on drugs. The students paid the women,



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Teri Lynn Cohen
San Francisco, California

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and asked them to leave early. The woozy woman, Flannery said, eventually passed out, and had to be assisted to her car, at which point both women drove away.

Wasiolek urged the students to be honest in their dealings with the authorities and to coöperate fully with any investigation.

The next evening, March 16th, school officials learned that a search warrant had been issued for the Buchanan house. The case was now being handled by two Durham police investigators, the veteran sergeant Mark Gottlieb and a rookie investigator, Benjamin Himan, who had been promoted to the position in January. Wasiolek telephoned Pressler, who called the students at their house. He discovered that the three roommates—Flannery, David Evans, and Matt Zash, who were team captains—had already let the police in and had shown them around the place; when asked if they would go to the station to answer some questions, they agreed. By the end of the search, the police had seized evidence including four laptop computers, three digital cameras, a bathmat, a bath rug, five artificial fingernails, a bottle of K-Y jelly, and a stack of twenty-dollar bills.

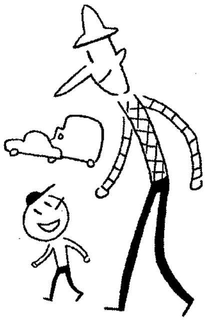
At the police station, the three young men offered to take a polygraph test. The police declined the offer, but questioned them extensively about the night of the party and sent them to the hospital to have DNA samples collected. The boys had no legal representation during this visit with police.

On Saturday, March 18th, the team had a home game against the University of North Carolina, overcoming an early 6–0 deficit to win, 11–8. That weekend, the first accounts of the alleged assault appeared in the local newspapers—police-blotter items that did not mention the Duke connection. President Brodhead first learned of the incident on Monday, March 20th, when the school paper, the *Chronicle*, reported that the scene of the alleged crime was one of the off-campus houses that Duke had recently bought. Brodhead telephoned Larry Moneta, the university's vice-president for student affairs, who responded with the now common view of the matter among Duke officials: the accusation wasn't credible, and nothing much was likely to come of it.

The *Chronicle* and the Raleigh *News & Observer* published stories in the following days reporting that there had been a party at the Buchanan house and that alcohol had been involved. In both accounts, Sergeant Gottlieb made a point of saying that the residents had coöperated with the police. The narrative of the incident to this point, largely shaped by the field cops who had first encountered the accuser, suggested the tenor and the pace of a routine inquiry into off-campus student high jinks.

On the day that the Durham police searched the Buchanan house, March 16th, the investigators Himan and Gottlieb drove to the accuser's home and heard her version of events. Her account this time was more explicit: she had been attacked by three of the men at the party, who had held her in a bathroom and raped her orally, vaginally, and anally, she told the investigators. And she knew her attackers' names—Adam, Matt, and Bret.

It seemed like a breakthrough lead. There were players with those names on the team, including three named Matt. That evening, two other investigators gave the woman a chance to identify the men she was accusing and showed her a photographic lineup, using pictures of the players taken from the team's Web page. The woman looked at the pictures of the men. "This is harder than I thought," she said. She was able to pick out a few faces of boys whom she remembered seeing at the party, but she could identify none of them as her attacker. She did not recognize any of the boys whose names she had given to Himan and Gottlieb.



The investigators decided to try another approach. On Monday, March 20th, Himan telephoned Coach Pressler and said that he'd like to gather the whole team for an informal meeting, at which he would speak to each of the players who had been at the party. A local attorney, Wes Covington, who had handled the occasional student brush with the law, told Pressler that he thought the meeting with Himan was a good idea. An appointment was set up for the afternoon of Wednesday, March 22nd.

By this time, a few of the players had told their parents about the incident. Now, faced with the meeting with the investigators, one of the players called his father, a Washington attorney; the father insisted that the meeting be postponed, and quickly retained another Durham attorney, Robert Ekstrand, to represent the boys.

On Tuesday, March 21st, police prepared a second photographic lineup for the accuser. She remarked that they all looked alike. She was also interviewed by Himan. In his notes of that meeting he wrote, "She was unable to remember anything further about the suspects." He also noted that the woman did say that she had drunk a twenty-four-ounce beer before arriving at the party, and that she had performed for a couple in a hotel room using a vibrator.

On Thursday, March 23rd, ten days after the party, Himan and the Durham assistant district attorney David Saacks applied to Judge Ronald L. Stephens for a court order demanding that all forty-seven members of the lacrosse team except one, who was black, submit to photographs and DNA testing. In support of the request, Himan submitted the essential text of his application for the earlier search warrant:

> Two males, Adam and Matt pulled the victim into the bathroom. Someone closed the door to the bathroom where she was, and said "sweet heart you can't leave." The victim stated she tried to leave, but the three males (Adam, Bret, and Matt) forcefully held her legs and arms and raped and sexually assaulted her anally, vaginally and orally. The victim stated she was hit, kicked, and strangled during the assault. As she attempted to defend herself, she was overpowered. The victim reported she was sexually assaulted for an approximate 30 minute time period by the three males.

Saacks said in the application that the DNA samples were crucial to the case. They would "immediately rule out any innocent persons," he wrote, "and show conclusive evidence as to who the suspect(s) are in the alleged violent attack upon this victim." Judge Stephens ordered the students to comply.

Brodhead learned of this development as he was preparing to travel with Bob Steel by private jet to Atlanta, to watch Krzyzewski's basketball team play L.S.U. in the N.C.A.A. tournament. "It

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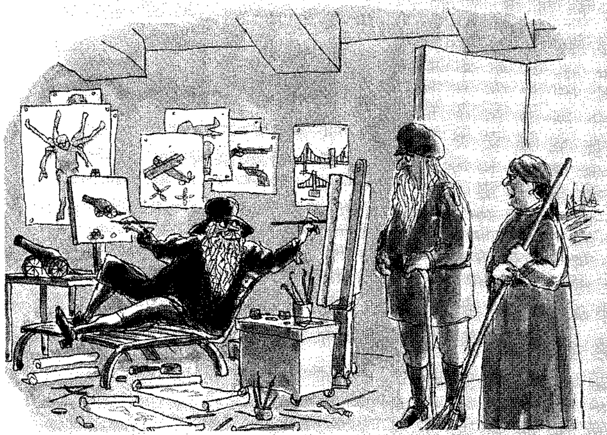

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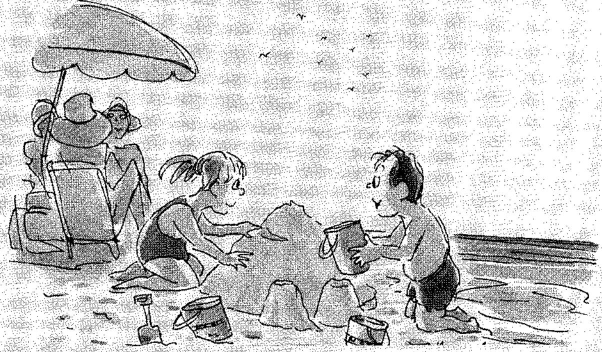

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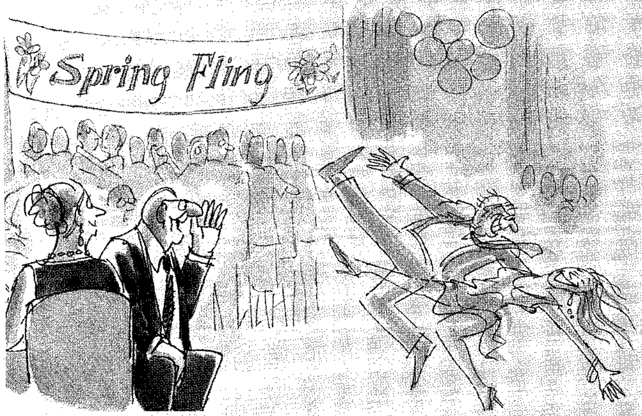

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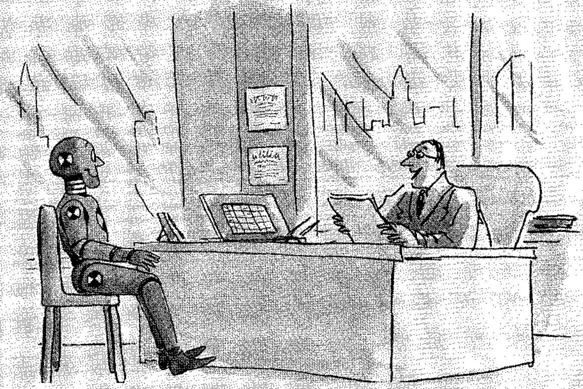

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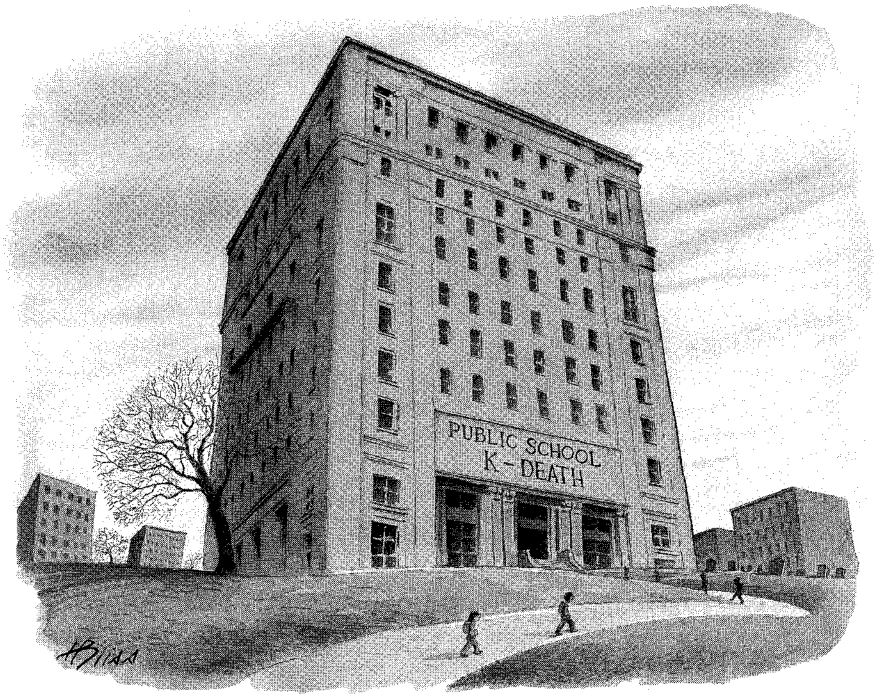

suggested that it was being treated with a degree of gravity and scope very different from what I had been told heretofore," Brodhead says.

That evening, the lacrosse players, accompanied by their new lawyer, Ekstrand, arrived at the police crime lab in downtown Durham. The Raleigh *News & Observer* had got word of their arrival and sent a reporter and a photographer to the scene. Seeing the journalists, Ekstrand instructed the players not to answer any questions and to shield their faces from the camera. The resulting image was that of a massive perp walk.

A *News & Observer* reporter located the accuser, and the paper published a profile that was wholly sympathetic to her. A new narrative fell into place. The woman was a mother, the paper reported, a full-time student at North Carolina Central University—Durham's historically black state college, on the other side of town. She had been working dancing engagements through an escort service for only two months, a job that helped to support her family. "This was the first time she had been hired to dance provocatively for a group," the paper reported. The woman said that she had arrived at the house expecting to perform for five men at a bachelor party; instead, "she found herself surrounded by more than forty." Moments after she and the other woman started their performance, she said, the men "started barking racial slurs."

"We started to cry," she said. "We were so scared."

When the story was published, on Saturday, March 25th, the television satellite trucks were already jostling for parking places in the circular lot near the Duke chapel. Exams were nearing, and students found themselves confronted by national reporters at every turn. Their stories relied heavily upon the warrant summation of Investigator Himan, which had now been made public. A New York *Times* Op-Ed piece by the writer Allan Gurganus provided an admiring critique of Himan's prose: "Its allegations of rape and sodomy prove weirdly well written, more gripping reading than most detective novels." Gurganus was among those sounding the emerging themes of the case, suggesting that the fault might lie in the sport itself. ("Young male students are apt to take on the nature of their particular sport. One early explorer, after witnessing an Indian game involving hundreds of stick-wielding players, wrote, 'Almost everything short of murder is allowable.' ") Lacrosse as a cause of sociopathic behavior was vigorously proposed, and the sport's demographic cohort critically examined. "It's a sport of privilege played by children of privilege and supported by families of privilege," the columnist David Steele wrote in the Baltimore *Sun*. "The university involved is one of privilege."

A Duke law professor offered the opinion that young men who played helmeted sports, which he called "sports of violence," were more likely to commit acts of violence against women. "This is clearly a concern," he said. Several writers invoked the ancient American taboo against miscegenation. ("White men portrayed black women as especially erotic, more driven to sexual pleasure and expressiveness than white women," the Duke history professor William H. Chafe wrote.)

The predominant theme in all the coverage, though, was the matter of the social implications of the alleged assault—a black woman raped by white men, a black public school contrasted with Duke, the perceived racial tensions in a town roughly equally divided between blacks and whites. "The case has drawn national attention to Duke and Durham while underscoring issues of class and race between the private university and the city" (the *Times*); "The situation has exposed serious issues of race, gender and class division" (the *News & Observer*); the case had intensified "undercurrents of privilege and race in a blue-collar city of two hundred thousand that is forty-four per cent black while home to one of the nation's élite universities" (ESPN).

The Durham police, who three days earlier had emphasized the coöperation of the Buchanan-house residents, now seemed to have adopted a strategy of provocation. On the weekend of March 25th, a Durham police corporal named David Addison repeatedly proclaimed the community's outrage. "We do know that some of the players inside the house on that evening knew what transpired, and we need them to come forward," he was quoted as saying on CBS News. "That brutal assault, that brutal rape that occurred within that house, cannot be explained by anyone," he said on ABC. This led to much media speculation on the team members' "wall of silence."

When lacrosse families and fans arrived on campus for a game against Georgetown on Saturday afternoon, they were greeted by protesters, some carrying signs with messages like "Don't be a fan of rapists." On Saturday night, two hundred protesters held a candlelight vigil along North Buchanan Boulevard, singing

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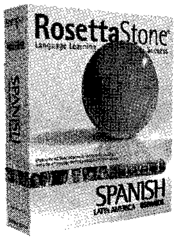

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“Amazing Grace” and depositing their spent candles on the steps of the infamous house. The next morning, they gathered at the house again, banging pots and declaring that they were sounding “a wakeup call.” The “pot-bangers,” as the protesters came to be known, moved to the home of the university's provost, Peter Lange, and remained there until he came outside to address them. The Reverend Jesse Jackson became interested in the case.

On Monday, March 27th, one week after Investigator Himan had invited the team in for a friendly chat, Durham's district attorney, Michael B. Nifong, publicly associated himself with the case for the first time. Nifong was virtually unknown in Durham, despite having spent twenty-seven years in the prosecutor's office, but among attorneys he had the reputation of being a fair and capable prosecutor (“probably the best lawyer in that office,” the Durham defense attorney Tom Loflin says). Starting out as a volunteer assistant, he worked his way up to assistant district attorney prosecuting homicide and drug cases, and got his share of convictions. Acquaintances say that Nifong never coveted the top job; he wasn't political, and lacked the appetite and the instinct for public campaigning. Because of his long service, he earned around a hundred thousand dollars a year, nearly as much as some of the district attorneys he worked for.

In 1999, Nifong learned that he had prostate cancer, and underwent treatment. When he was able to return to work, his boss, District Attorney Jim Hardin, Jr., assigned him to traffic court—a sort of early semi-retirement.

Last year, when Hardin was appointed to a judgeship, Governor Mike Easley appointed Nifong to finish his term. Nifong, who was just a few years short of reaching his thirty-year mark, subsequently announced that he would run for a full term in the spring. As a Democrat, he needed only to win the Party's nomination in a May primary to be virtually assured of election. Polls taken by Nifong's opponent, a former assistant D.A. named Freda Black, showed Nifong, whose name recognition was marginal, running considerably behind her. Black was well known, because in 2003, while Nifong was negotiating traffic cases, she had been Hardin's chief courtroom assistant on a notorious socialite-murder case that had been carried live on Court TV. In his first week on the job as Hardin's replacement, Nifong had fired her. She says he gave no explanation. (He has since hinted that it had something to do with conflict of interest.)

On March 27th, after the weekend of protests, Nifong declared that he was personally taking over the lacrosse case, and he began an extraordinary blitz of public appearances, being interviewed upward of fifty times. He repeated the charges of a conspiracy of silence among the players, and suggested that those who failed to come forward might face charges of aiding and abetting the crime. He repeatedly declared his belief that a crime had occurred, and said, “My guess is that some of this stone wall of silence that we have seen may tend to crumble once charges begin to come out.”

He publicly emphasized the racial implications of the incident, telling the *Times*, “The reason I decided to take it over myself was the combination gang-like rape activity accompanied by the racial slurs and general racial hostility. . . . There are three people who went into the bathroom with the young lady, and whether the other people there knew what was going on at the time, they do now and have not come forward. I'm disappointed that no one has been enough of a man to come forward.”

Nifong also demonstrated on television how he imagined the alleged victim was grabbed and held by her attackers. He suggested that the woman might have been given a date-rape drug, and even held the students' decision to hire attorneys against them. “One would wonder why one needs an attorney if one was not charged and had not done anything wrong,” he said. He referred to the athletes as “a bunch of hooligans,” and played upon presumed resentment of Durhamites toward the school, which some still called the Plantation. “There's been a feeling in the past that Duke students are treated differently by the court system,” Nifong said. “There was a feeling that Duke students' daddies could buy them expensive lawyers and that they knew the right people.”

Stinging though Nifong's comments were, he was saying nothing that was not also being heard on the Duke campus. One group of students distributed a flyer around campus—in the style of a "Wanted" poster—with pictures of the lacrosse players and the command "Please come forward." Protesters chanted slogans outside the Allen Building, another group of students demonstrated until Brodhead agreed to meet with them, and reporters found no shortage of students willing to portray the alleged attack as symptomatic of larger problems at Duke. "There's a culture of rape at Duke, so we're hoping this will get them to speak up," a student told *USA Today*.

Much of the bitterest vitriol came from members of the Duke faculty. In overheated faculty meetings, in furious e-mail exchanges, in protest rallies, and in comments to the press, many at Duke seemed willing to assume not only the players' guilt but the university's. At a session of the Academic Council, the faculty governance body, Brodhead was roundly assailed for not taking decisive action against the team, and one professor stood and urged him to confess publicly that Duke was a racist and misogynist institution. Houston A. Baker, an English professor who has since left Duke for Vanderbilt, asserted in a letter (which he subsequently made public) to Peter Lange, the provost, that at Duke white male athletes were "veritably given license to rape, maraud, deploy hate speech," and excoriated the university for its complicity in the "sexual assault, verbal racial violence, and drunken white male privilege loosed amongst us."

Inside the Allen Building, Brodhead and his administration felt besieged, and a bit bewildered. "The nature of the information kept changing, and was extraordinarily confusing," he recalls. "You don't have a playbook in the drawer. And what made it hard was not only the scale of emergency—it was the combination of the extraordinarily inflammatory versions of the story with very high degrees of uncertainty." The press demanded regular briefings, and on more than one occasion Brodhead found himself confronted with an unexpected development even as he was speaking to reporters. It was at a press conference that Brodhead learned about the 911 call complaining of racial slurs against a woman passing by the Buchanan house. On April 5th, as Brodhead was preparing to announce a fairly measured response to the uproar, he learned about an e-mail sent by a player named Ryan McFadyen in the hours just after the party.

> To whom it may concern
>
> tommrow night, after tonights show, ive decided to have some strippers over to edens 2c. all are welcome.. however there will be no nudity. i plan on killing the bitches as soon as the walk in and proceeding to cut their skin off while cumming in my duke issue spandex.. all in besides arch and tack please respond

Brodhead, who had been trying to maintain a balance between avoiding prejudgment and satisfying the mounting pressure for action, was outraged. He said he found the message "sickening and repulsive," and he acted immediately. He suspended McFadyen. Coach Pressler was informed that he had until the end of the day to leave the campus, where he had coached for sixteen years. Brodhead also announced a series of committees that would investigate the team, the administration's handling of the matter, and the Duke culture itself. In a letter to the Duke community, he wrote that the lacrosse episode "has brought to glaring visibility underlying issues that have been of concern on this campus and in this town for some time." The letter went on:

> They include concerns of women about sexual coercion and assault. They include concerns about the culture of certain student groups that regularly abuse alcohol and the attitudes these groups promote. They include concerns about the survival of the legacy of racism, the most hateful feature American history has produced.
>
> Compounding and intensifying these issues of race and gender, they include concerns about the deep structures of inequality in our society—inequalities of wealth, privilege, and opportunity (including educational opportunity), and the attitudes of superiority those inequalities breed. And they include concerns that, whether they intend to or not, universities like Duke participate in this inequality and supply a home for a culture of privilege.

There was, in the media onslaught, a hint of Schadenfreude—some outsiders find Duke an easy place to hate. It had been, as Bob Steel said, a school very much in a hurry. Duke had achieved the No. 5 position in a ranking of American universities; the others in the top five—Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Penn—had been more than a century old when Duke was still a tiny religious school on the Carolina frontier. Now that Duke had arrived, there was impassioned disagreement over what should come next.

The path on the way up had been easier to discern. When, in 1859, the Methodists offered financing to Normal College, a small school in rural Randolph County, the school jumped at it, and became Trinity College. Thirty years later, the Yale-trained Northerner John Crowell became president, and planned a

"Oh, that—that's the hard drive from my first marriage."

major university on the German model. He solicited the patronage of the tobacco baron Washington Duke and moved Trinity to Duke's home town of Durham (adopting Yale blue as the school color). When Duke's son, James B. Duke, offered to build a majestic new campus for Trinity and endow a university, the school renamed itself yet again. To design the new buildings, Duke commissioned the Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer, who had put mansion roofs over the heads of the ruling class during the Gilded Age. For the new campus in Durham, Trumbauer fancied a Gothic Revival evocation of Oxford and Cambridge, and the spectacular sandstone result was hardly intended to mute any inference of privilege.

When the new campus opened, in the fall of 1930, the university set out to buy itself a championship-level football program and hired the University of Alabama's William Wallace Wade as athletic director and football coach. Wade quickly made Duke a national football power, winning the Southern Conference title within three years and taking his undefeated Blue Devils to the Rose Bowl for a contest with Southern Cal.

In 1969, Duke's academic ambitions found perfect expression in the person of Terry Sanford, the state's famously progressive former governor, who served as Duke's president for sixteen years. At a time when Jesse Helms was stirring up white resentment toward integration on the Tobacco Radio Network, Sanford wanted to set a national example of a transcendent South. The term he coined for his vision of Duke was "outrageous ambition." Sanford closed Duke's education and undergraduate nursing schools (its principal ties to the state and the region), and opened new departments likely to bring national recognition—of business administration and of public policy. He encouraged department heads to scout the upper-tier universities for young teaching talent, and his friends in the national media began to notice his institution. When Sanford left to mount a successful campaign for the Senate, Duke had the reputation of a national university.

It was a Duke provost, Phillip Griffiths, who devised the strategy that cemented that reputation. Griffiths, a mathematician, recognized that the most efficient way to buy academic cachet for Duke was through the recruitment of high-profile stars in the humanities. (Such stars, however high their salaries, were much cheaper than even entry-level postdoctoral hires in the hard sciences, because there were no lab-setup costs.) One of the first big hires, in 1986, was Stanley Fish. He brought an outsized ego, a Jaguar, and postmodernism to Duke, and, as chairman of the English Department, he moved the academy to the front lines of the gathering culture wars. With its debates over campus codes forbidding "hate" speech, and the hiring of such faculty luminaries as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who brought queer theory to Durham, Duke became famous as the home campus of tenured zaniness (and the inspiration for Dinesh D'Souza's "Illiberal Education") at a time when the controversy over P.C. orthodoxy was all the rage. By the end of the nineteen-eighties, graduate applications to the English Department had tripled. Fish moved on (he is now at Florida International University), but John F. Burness, Duke's senior vice-president for public affairs, says, "Duke was put on the map as a result of the English Department being a place of intellectual ferment. And we hear it today. Our ability to recruit faculty, in disciplines that have nothing to do with the humanities, came out of this sense of momentum."

The two strands of Duke's character create an interesting tension—Sparta and Athens, in one package. Brodhead has become a basketball fan, and he makes a point of meeting the students who sit near his mid-court seats at Cameron. One of them last year was a student from China, who was dressed up in Blue Devils fan gear. "A physicist, a violinist," Brodhead says. "This person came to this country, where he knew nobody, and where he knew nothing about the ways of this country, and, actually, sports on this campus form a community that enables people to come together from all different points of view."

Orin Starn, the sports-anthropology professor, is less sanguine. Duke, he says, has become "this place that's sort of divided against itself. On the one hand, you have this university that wants to be this first-class liberal-arts university, with a cutting-edge university press, these great programs in literature and history and African-American studies, that's really done some amazing things over the last twenty years, building itself from a kind of regional school mostly for the Southern élite into a really global university with first-class scholarship. But then you have another university. That's a university of partying and getting drunk, hiring strippers, frats, big-time college athletics."

At the end of the spring semester in 2004, Peter Wood, who teaches Native American history at Duke, was reading through his teacher evaluations when he came across one that startled him. "One kid wrote, 'I wish all the Indians had died; then we wouldn't have to study them.'"

"I had sixty-five students," Wood says. "Ten lacrosse players. Most of the students loved it. It was a good class."

Wood guessed that his anonymous student critic was one of the lacrosse players, and wrote a letter to an undergraduate dean expressing his concern about the bad attitude of some athletes and about "the increasing centrality of sport" at Duke.

That gesture gave Wood a proprietary position in the jocks-gone-wild discourse that attended the lacrosse scandal. He was invited to a meeting with Brodhead and drafted onto campus culture committees, and was one of the more forceful voices at the feverish Academic Council meeting in late March. Wood had been one of the brilliant young hires of the Terry Sanford era, a Harvard scholar who was a pioneer in the new field of black American history. He had particular credibility on the subject of sports on campus, because of his pedigree (his father was a famous collegiate football player), and because he had been the captain of the Harvard lacrosse team and coached women's lacrosse at Duke when it was a club sport. "My dad was an All-American football player, but he was also a straight-A student," Wood says. "I grew up in a world where these things were supposed to fit together nicely, and they no longer do."

In 2005, Duke achieved a top-five ranking among Division I schools for athletic success, fielding twenty-six varsity teams in sports ranging from football to fencing. Such a commitment to sports carries a significant price tag: Duke's annual athletic budget is nearing fifty million dollars. Wood's ally in this debate, Starn, says, "If you were starting from scratch at Duke, no one would have

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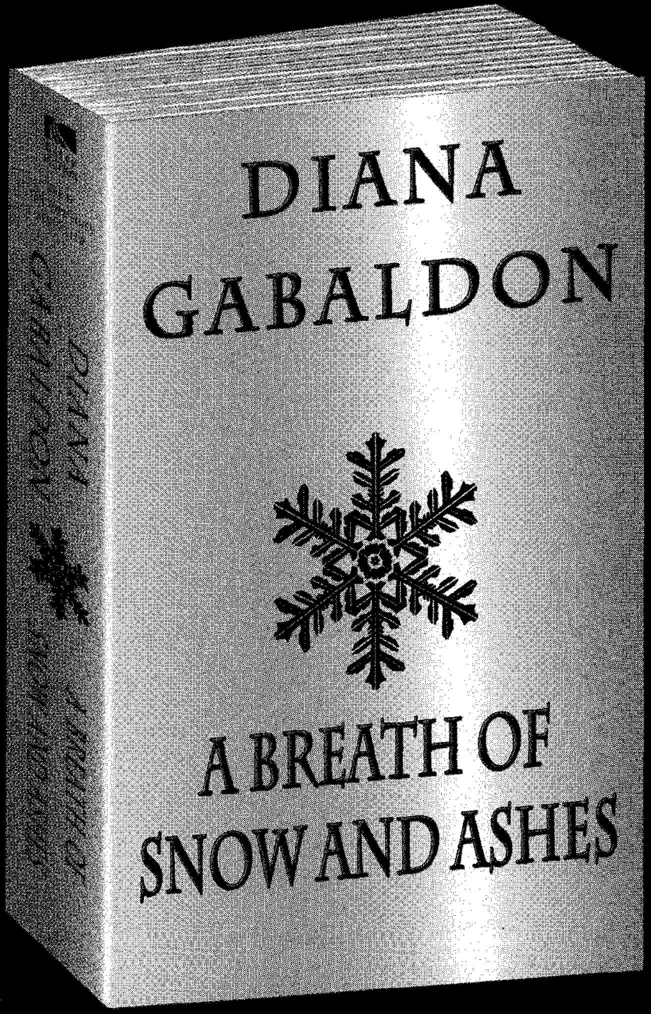
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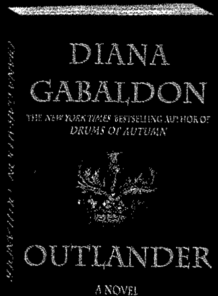
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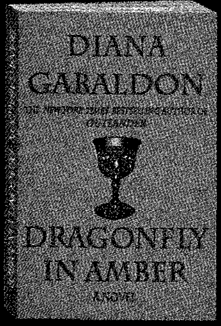
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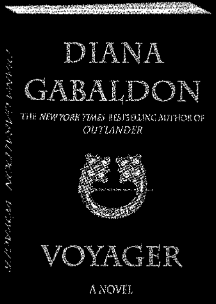
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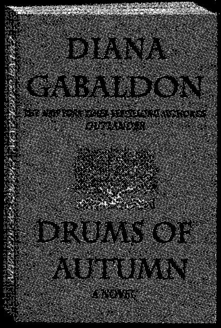
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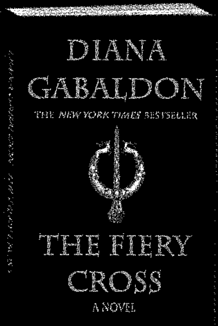
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imagined an athletics program where the budget is almost fifty million dollars. This huge outlay of expenses and energy and visibility of sports is just clearly out of proportion with what it should be. Yes, athletics has a place in college education, but not this sort of massive space that it's taking."

But what allowed Wood to so easily tag his anonymous evaluator as a lacrosse player was his conviction that the play-hard cohort was poisoning the campus culture at Duke, and that lacrosse players were at the heart of the problem.

Even before the lacrosse scandal, alarms had been sounded over the coarsening of undergraduate life. Toward the end of Nan Keohane's tenure as president, the school undertook an extensive study examining the lives of women at Duke. The project's summation reads like a scholarly anticipation of Tom Wolfe's "I Am Charlotte Simmons," the 2004 novel (published after Wolfe's daughter graduated from Duke) portraying college life as a soul-deadening, booze-fuelled marathon of sexual predation:

> Students rarely go on formal dates but instead attend parties in large groups, followed by "hook-ups"—unplanned sexual encounters typically fueled by alcohol. Men and women agreed the double standard persists: men gain status through sexual activity while women lose status. Fraternities control the mainstream social scene to such an extent that women feel like they play by the men's rules. Social life is further complicated by a number of embedded hierarchies, from the widely understood ranking of Greek organizations to the opposite trajectories women and men take over four years, with women losing status in the campus environment while men gain status.

When the lacrosse story broke, last spring, Elizabeth Chin's anthropology class was studying Margaret Mead's "Coming of Age in Samoa," occasioning lively inquiry into the mores governing Duke's undergraduate life. For Chin, a visiting professor from Occidental College, the sessions were surprising, and instructive. Several of the young women in her class were members of Duke's élite sororities—the Core Four, as they are called. "The sorority women in particular were trying to convince me that the sexually free and exploratory world that Mead describes is pretty much the same thing as the hookup culture," Chin recalls. She wasn't buying it. "The whole hookup thing is, you get really drunk so that, at some level, you can't be responsible," she says. "And then you hook up and then there's no obligation. It's bad manners, in fact, to sort of get emotionally connected to the person. But I don't think any of them like it that much. . . . It's dehumanizing. And it's very alienating. It's sort of like they have to deaden themselves before they can go do it."

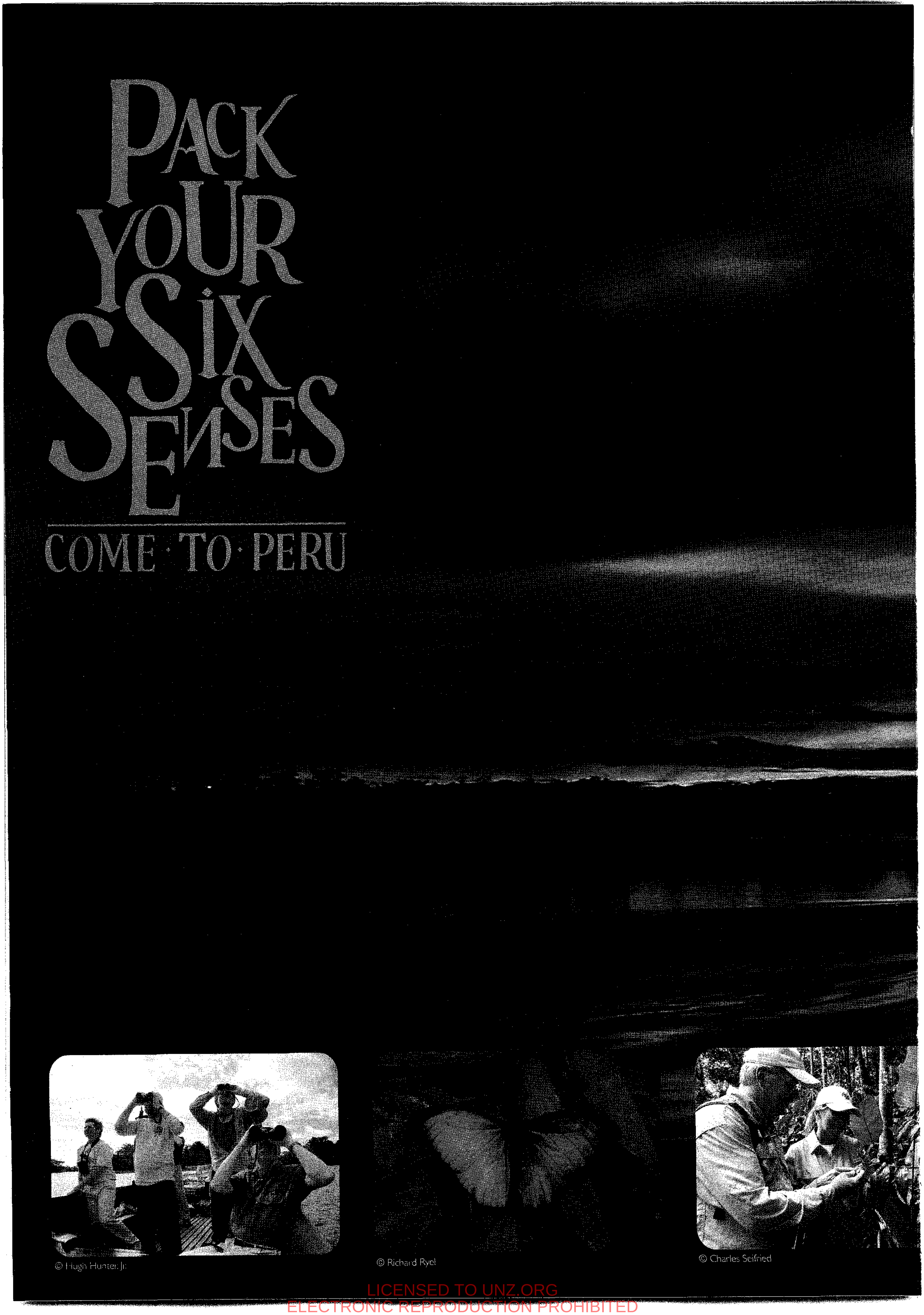
Peter Wood discerns in the Duke undergrad culture a widening milieu of studied vulgarity. "Do you know about the baby-oil bust?" he asked me. He was referring to an off-campus fraternity party last winter which featured bikini-clad coeds wrestling in a plastic wading pool filled with baby oil; the party, attended by two hundred people, dispersed when neighbors summoned the police. After the lacrosse incident in the Buchanan house, many of the adults at Duke were surprised to learn that the hiring of strippers was a familiar practice. Some of the strippers that come onto the Duke campus are men, Bob Steel told me, by way of offering context. "So it's not just men getting women."

Wood contends that a relatively small group of social élites exert a growing influence over the broader undergraduate population. "It's an infection that spreads out," he says. The upper rungs of the "embedded hierarchies" cited by Keohane's study are vigorously contended over by the élite fraternities and sororities, but the alpha partyers at Duke are the members of the men's lacrosse team. The team is a fraternity unto itself, and is accorded the top prize of social striving: the deference of its peers. Coeds who are favored with the company of players are known as "lacrosstitutes," a term that Wood was surprised to learn is not necessarily pejorative. A sharp-eyed campus social critic, the widely read anonymous blogger known as DukeObsrvr, summed up the men's lacrosse team's place in the social hierarchy this way: "Let's not kid ourselves, what frat doesn't hate these fuckers? The lacrostitute is a notch higher on the social scale than the 'frat slut.' And dammit that's something worth fighting over."

Peter Wood and Orin Starn were among those who believed that the lacrosse scandal represented a rare opportunity for Duke. Starn hoped that Duke would eventually pull out of Division I competition. In a conversation in late May, he told me that the first important indication of Duke's direction would be a decision on whether or not to reinstate the lacrosse program. "I think it would be a huge mistake to go back to business as usual," he said. "Now, what happened, or didn't happen, I'm not sure we'll ever know. But at the very minimum we know that we have these guys hiring strippers, a record of underage drinking, and pretty strong evidence of the use of racial slurs."

Less than a week later, Brodhead convened a press conference, and announced that he was reinstating the lacrosse program. "I am, I know, taking a risk," Brodhead said, in lifting the suspension of the team. He said that the reinstatement was probationary, that the players had agreed to live by a new set of rules, and their behavior would be closely monitored.

It had been exactly two months since Brodhead cancelled the season, on a day, April 5th, that he now characterized as "a day of great hysteria." Much had happened since then. The committee examining the lacrosse culture found no evidence that team members were racist or sexist. The players were regarded by their professors, ten of whom were surveyed, to be "academically responsible students." (The lone dissenter was Peter Wood.) The committee's principal findings might have been crafted by the lacrosse booster club. "By all accounts, the lacrosse players are a cohesive, hard working, disciplined, and respectful athletic team," the report said. "Their behavior on trips is described as exemplary. Players clean the team bus before disembarking. Airline personnel have complimented them for their behavior. They observe curfews. They obey the team's no alcohol rule before games. They are respectful of people who serve the team, including bus drivers, airline personnel, trainers, the equipment manager, the team manager, and the groundskeeper. Finally, the lacrosse program has a 100% graduation rate." As for the team's inclination toward alcohol abuse, the report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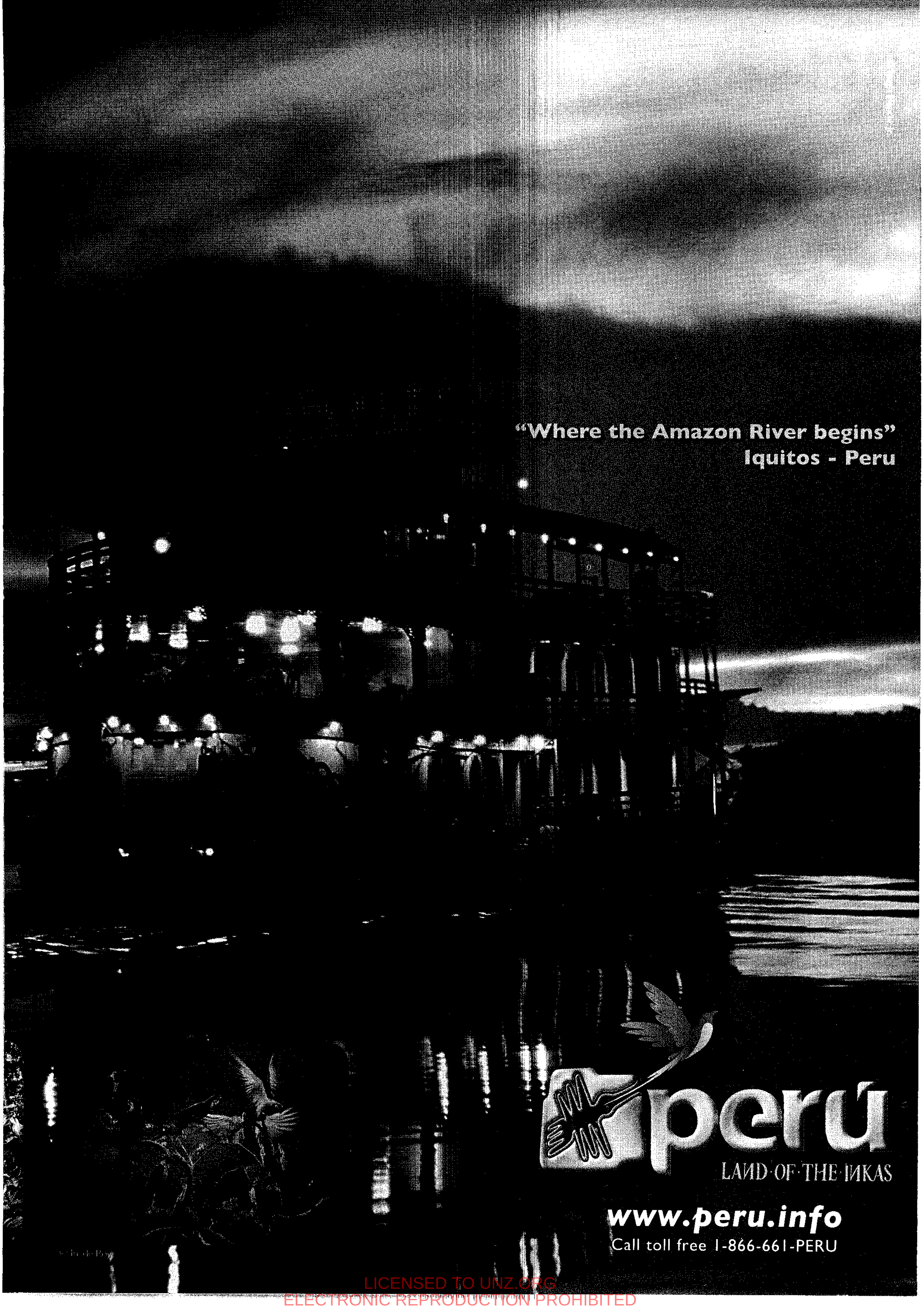
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noted that, in this, the lacrosse players differed little from other Duke students.

The report also showed that Coach Pressler disciplined the team whenever he was informed of misbehavior, and had suspended two players during the 2005 N.C.A.A. tournament for having violated team discipline. The university had plainly acted precipitately in firing Pressler, and Brodhead took pains to speak favorably of him whenever his name came up. (Pressler has taken a coaching job at Bryant University, in Rhode Island, a Division II school.)

Brodhead had also reconsidered the case of Ryan McFadyen, whose e-mail about skinning strippers Brodhead had come to see "in context." When I asked Brodhead about the e-mail this summer, he said that he would still describe it as sickening and repulsive, even though he now recognizes it as a morbid joke derived from "American Psycho." "The trouble is," he said, "this is a story in which everything and its opposite are true, in some measure." McFadyen was readmitted, and will play lacrosse for Duke next season.

When Brodhead cancelled the season, he had said that the moment was too serious to be playing games. What he meant, in part, was that Duke could not be seen to be playing games. From the start, Brodhead had been forced to navigate among several potentially hazardous interests—lacrosse parents who felt angry and abandoned by the school, dismayed alumni and donors, the agitated citizens of Durham, the clamoring press—while protecting what is known in the Allen Building as "the Duke brand." On that fitful weekend in late March when the TV satellite trucks hit campus, the lacrosse team could be seen practicing for the Georgetown game, a scene that became an endless video loop suggesting institutional indifference. "We had to stop those pictures," Bob Steel says. "It doesn't mean that it's fair, but we had to stop it. It doesn't necessarily mean I think it was right—it just had to be done."

The incident happened at the moment when high-school seniors were making their final decisions about which school they would attend this fall. Duke clearly took a hit, having to dip lower on its waiting list when about a hundred students who had been expected to come to Duke chose to enroll elsewhere. The university hired outside public-relations consultants, developed strategies to protect the brand, and commissioned polls measuring the damage caused by the scandal (surprisingly little, as it turned out).

The most liberating development for Brodhead and Duke was the dramatic turn in the public's impression of the criminal case. Mike Nifong, its vocal prosecutor, won the Democratic primary race on May 2nd. Nifong had denied any political motivation in the lacrosse prosecution ("I didn't pick the crime, I didn't pick the time," he told one campaign audience), but the case plainly helped him. After the election, a precinct-by-precinct study by the Vanderbilt professor Christian Grose showed that black voters helped secure Nifong's victory.

Nifong had indicted two students—Reade Seligmann and Collin Finnerty—on the basis of photo identification, and two weeks after the election, on May 15th, he secured the indictment of a third, David Evans, who, the day before, had received a bachelor's degree in economics from Duke. Before turning himself in and posting bond, Evans stood with his parents (his mother is Rae Evans, a Washington lobbyist and chairwoman of the board of the L.P.G.A.), his lawyers, and some of his teammates in front of the county jail and addressed the media throng. In his starched button-down oxford shirt and dark slacks, Evans looked like the preppie college boy he had recently been, but his tone, of controlled and righteous anger, suggested someone more substantive. Evans said that he and his roommates at the Buchanan house had helped the police in their search, that he had volunteered to take a polygraph test and to talk to Nifong personally, but that he had been rebuffed. "I am innocent," he proclaimed. "Reade Seligmann is innocent. Collin Finnerty is innocent. Every member of the Duke University lacrosse team is innocent. You have all been told some fantastic lies." It was a remarkable performance, and it shifted the tenor of the public narrative once again.

By then, Nifong had decided to go silent on the case, leaving the stage to the defense. The biggest blow to Nifong's public case was the DNA report from the state crime laboratory in Raleigh, which found that the samples collected from the accuser did not match any of the players'. Defense lawyers immediately began to attack Nifong's evidence, his procedures, and his impartiality.

Kirk Osborn, the attorney for Reade Seligmann, let it be known that he had visited Nifong early on to show him some exculpatory evidence, and that Nifong refused to see him. Shortly thereafter, some of that evidence became public. One or more of the players had photographed the party with a digital camera, which provided time-stamped photographs that helped to establish a time line of events. Through these pictures, and phone records, a taxi-driver's statement, security pictures at an A.T.M., and computerized entry documentation, Osborn was able to demonstrate convincingly that Seligmann was on the phone or in a cab during much of the time when the attack allegedly took place.

Osborn and the other attorneys began filing a series of motions, effectively opening whole portions of Nifong's case to public view. The evidence revealed that when the investigator Ben Himan first contacted the second stripper, Kim Roberts—she had made the first 911 call and was the driver of the Honda at Kroger—about the alleged rape, she called it "a crock" and said that it couldn't have happened. According to the defense attorneys, medical records showed that the hospital personnel who treated the accuser observed no sign of anal assault, only vaginal swelling. A statement given to police by a man who had driven the woman to various appointments in the days before the party indicated that she had seen at least three different clients in private performances at hotels that weekend. The defense could attempt to attribute the swelling to the performance with a vibrator that the woman had mentioned to Himan. Accounts from police and medical personnel now showed that the accuser had offered as many as ten differing accounts of what happened that night.

In the early phase of the story, the media had profiled the accuser as a working mother and full-time college student. Now her image was steadily being tarnished. She had told a nurse on the night of the assault that she was taking the muscle relaxant Flexeril. The accuser's family, in what was apparently meant to be a sympathetic series of reports in the magazine *Essence*, divulged that she had suffered a nervous breakdown last year, prompting a weeklong stay in a Raleigh hospital. Other press accounts revealed that a decade ago she'd made an earlier rape allegation that wasn't pursued (her father now said that it was falsely made); that she'd accused her former husband of trying to kill her; and that after a tryout at a strip club she had stolen a cab and led police on a drunken chase.

It was also learned that the photo identification of the three players Nifong indicted was the result of a procedure so problematic that it may prove not to have been worth the effort. After the failure of the first two tries at getting an identification, Nifong instructed police to compile a photographic lineup consisting only of lacrosse players, and to ask the accuser if she recognized her attackers. That process (which Osborn described as "a multiple-choice test with no wrong answers") seems to have been a violation of the Durham Police Department's own rules.

The accuser, meanwhile, has vanished; it is possible that she is in the protective custody of the police. Her father, who had speculated that she might not be up to testifying in a criminal case, said this month that he had not seen her since June.

Brodhead reflected on all that had happened as we chatted in his office in July, and said that it brought to mind Shakespeare's "Othello"—not for its obvious associations with interracial passions and violence but for its lesson on prejudgment. The scene at the beginning of the play, he said, was particularly instructive. Desdemona's father hears about his daughter's relationship with the Moor, and he sighs, "Belief of it oppresses me already."

"He doesn't say, 'Oh, now I see what you're getting at,' " Brodhead said. "He's saying, 'Now I realize that I always believed it'—'Belief of it oppresses me already.' It's probably, to my mind, the greatest literary image of the action of prejudice—how a story is told to engage something in the mind that brings with it absolute certainty that derives from the nature of the stereotypes."

He had located a clarifying point of reference in the lacrosse ordeal, and he became animated. It had been a headlong narrative, driven partly by a willingness to affirm favored certitudes about justice.

" 'Belief of it oppresses me already,' you know?" he continued. "And the thing is, we actually can't blame people for being subject to this, because it is so deeply human. And if, from day to day, we've seen people in the throes of this, we recognize that as a dimension of our humanity. At the same time, it really is our obligation to resist it, because, you know—truth and justice, they are cant phrases unless we try to take the trouble to make them have a reality to them. And what do truth and justice mean? Truth and justice mean something opposite from our preconceptions." ♦

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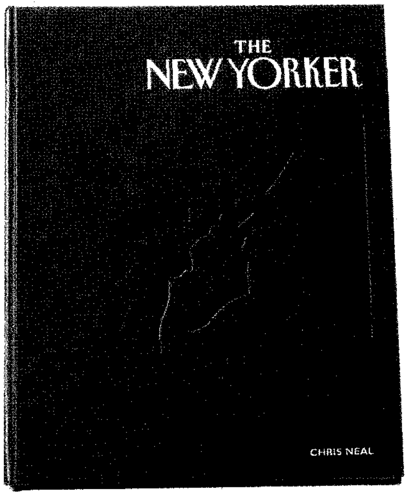

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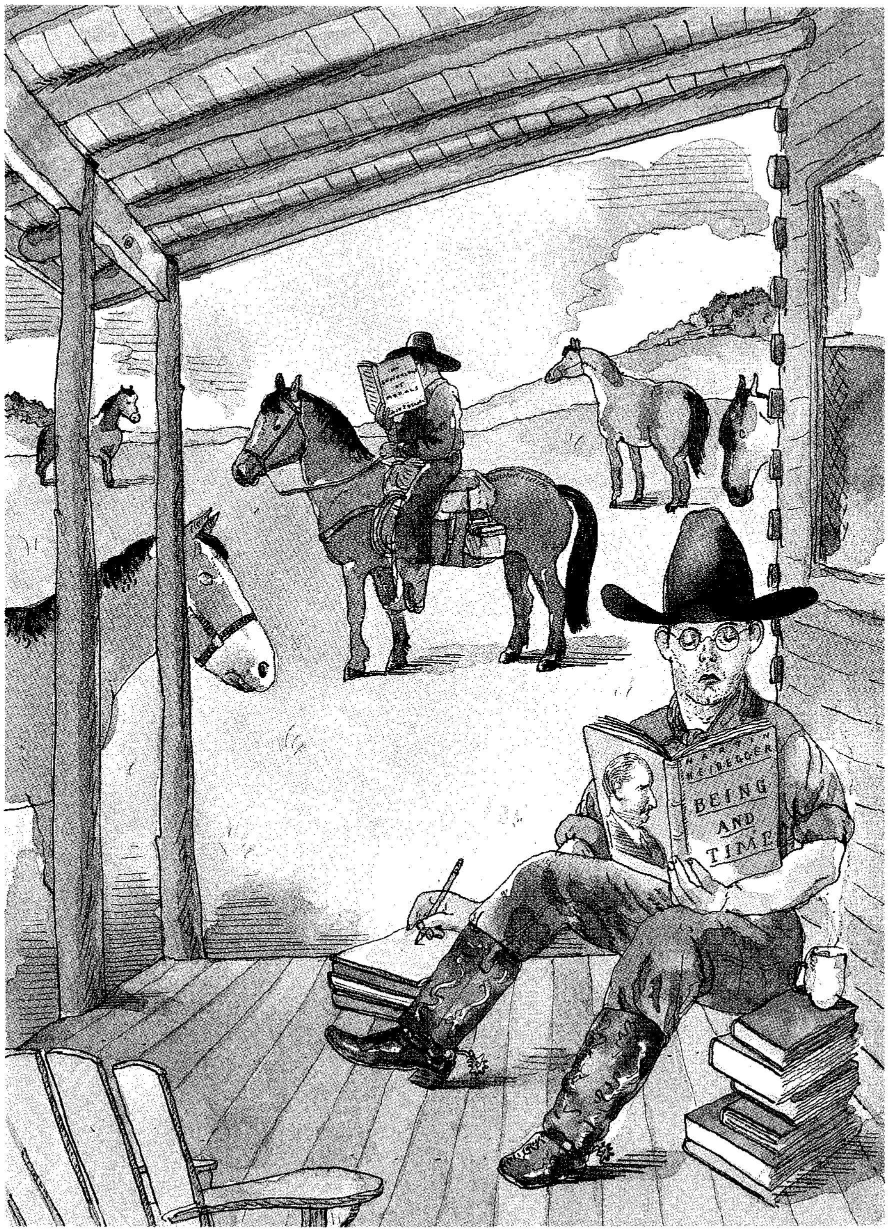

One student said, " 'False dichotomy' and 'discourse' are our favorite words."

L. L. Nunn, at just over five feet, was several inches shorter than his hero, Napoleon. He had a shrill voice, a stiff-collared Victorian habit of dress, and an energetic manner, in spite of a persistent case of tuberculosis that frequently reduced him to less than a hundred pounds. A lifelong bachelor, Nunn started investing in Western mines in the late nineteenth century, and grew rich from hydroelectric power after he collaborated with George Westinghouse to perform early trials in alternating-current electricity. With his brother P.N., an engineer, he built the power station at Niagara Falls, Ontario. Though Nunn, who died in 1925, never graduated from college, he devoted the last two decades of his life to a novel form of education, an anomalous admixture of Christian mysticism, imperialist élitism, Boy Scout-like abstinence, and Progressive era learning-by-doing, with an emphasis on self-governance, leadership training, and the formation of strong character.

"I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform," John Dewey wrote at the turn of the twentieth century. Nunn subscribed to that idea, and to the notion that schools should be laboratories of democracy. He railed against "the horrible mess which commercialism has made of so-called civilization," and bemoaned "the bitter dissatisfaction which our educational system with its teaching that 'All men are equal' is plunging the nation into." Nunn wished, he wrote, to train future leaders for a new society—"to do for a few boys what Edmund Burke's tutor did for him."

Nunn's hopeful experiment, which led him to establish a scholarship house at Cornell, culminated in the founding, in 1917, of a small men's school called Deep Springs College, on a working cattle ranch in the California high desert, not far from Death Valley. A student from the early twenties, interviewed for an oral history of the school, remembered the terrain as a "barren, treeless, rather Dante-like Inferno lying out there in the late afternoon sun." Nunn wanted his students to form and govern their own ideal society, a project that he felt required their total attention: he limited enrollment to about twenty-five men, and, to discourage what he called "entangling alliances," restricted contact with the residents of Bishop, a town forty miles away. According to Nunn's biographer, Orville Sweeting, who died in 1976, leaving eighteen hundred pages in rough manuscript form, "L.L. said that Deep Springs Valley was selected for the express purpose of controlling by natural barriers a social condition which institutions all over the land control by regulations."

The desert setting also lent a useful symbolism to the enterprise. "It is a fact of social evolution that spiritual leadership is the work of the few, 'The Children of Light,'" Nunn wrote to the stu-

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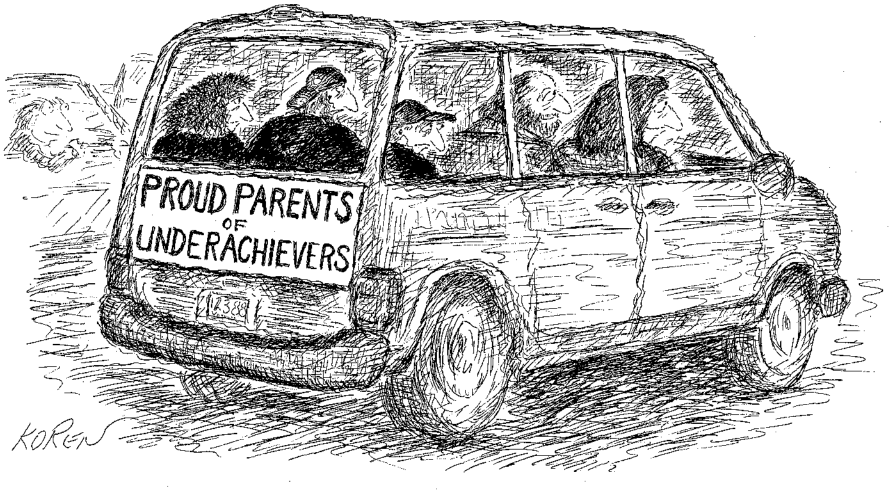
dent body in 1924. “And the few have often come out of the wilderness—the eternal silence of the desert. When Jesus saw the vision of a blind and wandering people, he went apart to pray. ‘Come ye out from among them and be separate,’ and this is not to a fanatic life of asceticism but to a short season of preparation for the work of the few, the great work—the heavy toil of leadership.” When the students pestered or contradicted him, or merely asked to be reminded of what they were doing there, he shushed them, and told them to listen to the desert’s voice.

Deep Springs is five hours north of Los Angeles, on a route that skirts the Mojave and follows the line of the Sierra Nevada. The road goes through the Narrows—a one-way stretch between rocky scarps the color of baker’s chocolate—and passes the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest (the trees are the oldest on earth) before reaching the valley floor, where the campus sits at the end of a long alley of cottonwoods, locusts, and Chinese elms. (Until recently, when the bus company changed its schedule, most students arrived by bus from Las Vegas, and met a driver from Deep Springs at the Cottontail Ranch, a brothel on the Nevada side.) The buildings of the school are stolid prairie-style blocks, arranged in a tight inward-facing circle around a central green. The property, hemmed in by mountains, is fifty square miles. There are two basic rules: observe isolation, and abstain from alcohol and drugs while school is in session. End of term is another matter. Bryce Goodman, who arrived in 2004 and is therefore, according to school custom, a member of the Class of ’04, says, “I’ve heard the voice of the desert, but I was really drunk at the time.”

The school is year-round and free, and, in exchange for room, board, and tuition, requires its students to do several hours of manual labor a day. The cattle operation, supervised by a full-time, live-in ranch manager, Ken Mitchell, consists of three hundred cows, sold at market with a brand that looks like a pair of back-to-back “L”s. Two “dairy boys” milk at dawn and dusk, a “feed man” pitches hay and gathers eggs from a henhouse, two students tend the garden, four irrigate alfalfa fields, one butchers; others cook, clean, do office work, and serve as handymen. “I have a friend who ranches in the next valley,” Mitchell said. “He said, ‘You have a lot of help, dontcha?’ I said, ‘Yeah, if I had any more help I wouldn’t get anything done.’”

As a two-year institution, Deep Springs is technically a junior college, but its success in placing students at prestigious universities puts it in a category of its own. In recent years, about a fourth of each graduating class has transferred into the sophomore or junior class at Harvard, a fourth to the University of Chicago, and one or two students have gone to Oxford, Yale, and Brown. A term at Deep Springs is seven weeks, during which students are expected to take two or three courses. In Nunn’s time, the students read biographies of great men, and took public speaking and composition. (The latter two are still the only requirements.) These days, the coursework is more eclectic. A committee of students, along with a faculty member and the academic dean, hires teachers, based on their proposed syllabi—there are usually three long-term faculty, who can stay for up to six years, and three visiting instructors, who spend several months. Intellectual taste at Deep Springs is governed by a sophisticated attraction to foundational books and an adolescent admiration of the obscure. Uncanonical subjects, such as Lusophone language and culture, the writings of Ivan Illich, traditional breads of Europe and the Middle East, and auto mechanics, are offered alongside Shakespeare, Proust, Lévi-Strauss, and Marx. Philosophy is perennially in fashion. A student nicknamed Dasein, after a term in Heidegger, told me, “‘False dichotomy’ and ‘discourse’ are our favorite words.” Science and math tend to be far less popular. Peter Sherman, an ecologist who taught at the school until last spring, complained, “The students’ fascination with the abstract is very boring. But as soon as the abstract grows concrete *they* grow bored.”

There are two classrooms at Deep Springs, both of them in the main building, which is the largest on the circle. It is low, with a porch (two swings, Adirondack chairs, some discarded textbooks, and, always, a second-year man, smoking) and wide stone steps. Inside, there is a small bookstore—mostly, the students use Amazon—a modest library, and a dusty computer room, equipped with Internet service, which, like the phones, goes down in the high afternoon winds. The classes are all seminars, and usually have only four or five students. An exception, this spring, was an oversubscribed nine-person class on Emily Dickinson, taught by a thirty-one-year-old Harvard Ph.D. candidate named Katie Peterson. (The college, being outside the normal channels of academia, generally appeals to scholars either at the beginning or at the end of their careers.) In Peterson’s classroom, an oil painting of a cowboy hat sitting on a stack of schoolbooks decorated one wall, and there was a large conference table, covered in a fine layer of grit. As the students came in, a lanky



first-year with shoulder-length dark hair stood at the blackboard writing out the poem that was to be discussed that day:

Pain—has an Element of Blank—
It cannot recollect
When it begun—Or if there were
A time when it was not—

It has no Future—but itself—

It's Infinite contain
It's Past—enlightened to perceive
New Periods—Of Pain.

On another blackboard, Peterson copied a definition from a nineteenth-century dictionary: "Dash: a mark of line in writing or printing, noting a break or stop in the sentence, as in Virgil, 'quos ego—' "

"Neptune is about to chastise these winds that have been let out by a lesser god, and he's so angry he can't finish," a handsome second-year classicist offered. "It's a classic example of aposiopesis."

"What?" Peterson said, with a faint, indulgent smile.

"Interrupted phrasing."

Two students, who said they had spent hours mapping and diagramming the poem the night before, laid out a complicated theory centered on the grammatical status of the word "contain." Peterson asked the students to think about physical rather than emotional pain. Instead, they discussed consciousness, the Enlightenment, and what would happen if you replaced "pain" with "I." When Peterson taught the poem a couple of years ago, she said, all anyone wanted to talk about was Derrida.

After class, the conversation continued at a long picnic table outside the boarding house, over a lunch of salad and beef stew. The classicist suggested a strict Biblical reading of the poem. "Pre-pain is Eden, and Jesus Christ's pain restores—its future is itself. It's Eve who started it."

"Can't you blame the snake?" Peterson said.

"No," he said, and laughed, then asked her to recommend some Emerson.

In 1923, Nunn wrote of Deep Springs, "Recently a very prominent educator in a letter to me, said, with apparent positive assurance, that it was 'blazing a trail which was destined to become an educational highway.' Others have mentioned it as the pioneer of many others, all combining in a work which must be done

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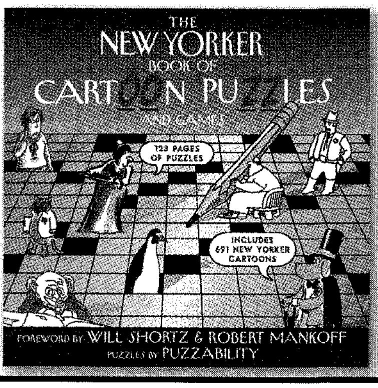

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in order to save the nation." But Deep Springs has not become a model for higher education. It remains exceptional, and in many ways it is as stubbornly defended against the outside world today as it was in 1917.

The Deep Springs boy is deliberate, thoughtful, studied. He is formal, if frank, and more than a little exacting. On my first morning there, in May, I met the dairy boys in the boarding house at five, and walked with them, down a dirt path under a full moon, to the cool stone dairy. A girlish cow with long eyelashes and a petticoat was painted on the door, and on a little clipboard there was a fifties-pinup-style picture of a buxom woman in a peasant blouse, holding the remains of an ice-cream cone that had evidently dropped down her front. The dairy boys said that prospective students visiting the school are made to go on the morning dairy run—"the afternoon wouldn't be hard-core enough"—so that their willingness to do chores can be measured and noted. These reports—"This person was completely incompetent"; "This person did each job with obsessive care"—are then submitted to a student applications committee, which recommends candidates to the whole student body and ultimately to the president. (There are about two hundred applicants each year for twelve or thirteen spots.) After the milking was done, one of the dairy boys sang in German as he swept the floor. "It's a Bavarian shepherd's song," he said. "But 'Dairy boys sing Bavarian shepherds' songs . . .' That would be too idyllic to mention."

Most of the students are white, suburban, and upper-middle-class, and it has been a struggle for the school to diversify. There are some Asians but rarely African-Americans (only two in Deep Springs's history), and few working-class or rural students. When I asked the college president, Ross Peterson, a fatherly historian in his sixties who was raised on a family farm in Idaho and went to Utah State, if he would have wanted to go to Deep Springs, he said, "Heavens, no."

The typical look—full beard, pastel bandanna, half-unstrapped Carhartt dungarees; nails dirty, glasses greasy, Leatherman at the ready—is an emblem of retreat from mainstream society. John Dewis, D.S. '94, who attended a prep school in Philadelphia, said, "I arrived wearing pressed khakis, looking like a Princeton a-cappella singer or something. By the end, I looked like Manson." The outré is accepted without hesitation. Kevin West, who went to Deep Springs in the late eighties, recalled one afternoon when a classmate's parents dropped by: "They were greeted by the one out-and-proud student in my class, who was wearing a pair of Daisy Duke cutoff jean shorts and had shaved his head bald and had a goatee, and had earrings in. Then they drove onto the circle and saw students lounging around in God knows what manner of getup, clothes off, and there was a giant American flag laid out on the lawn. My friend's father basically snatched him up by the ear and said, 'We're taking you home, young man. We're not going to allow you to fall prey to this cult.'" (He stayed.)

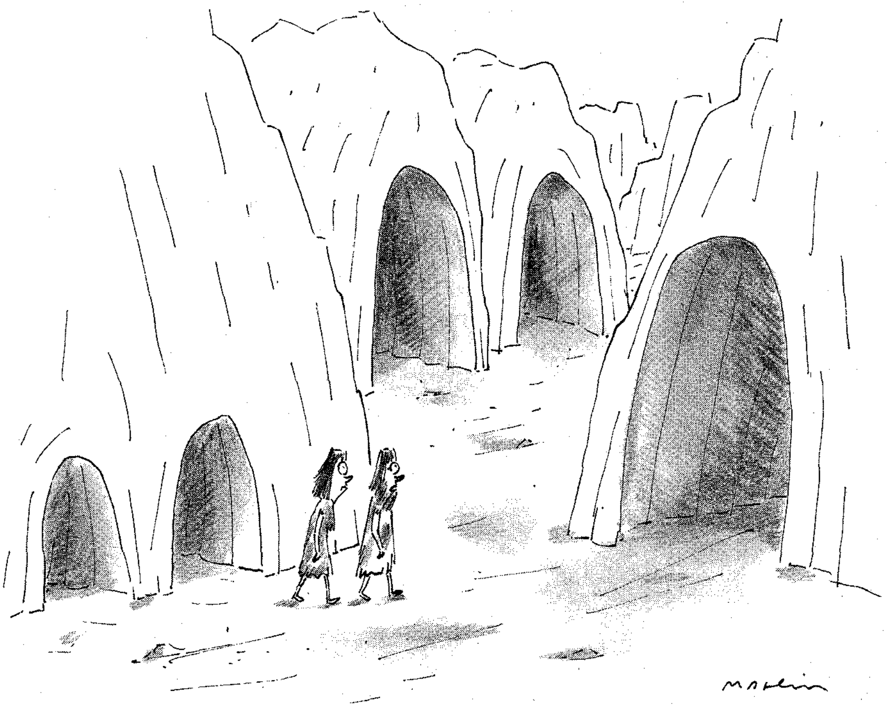
Students at the college generally detach themselves from knowledge of the broader world. The only current Deep Springer I met who had any interest in the news was from Nigeria; he regularly checked the Internet, because the papers get to the valley several days late. Last year, in a larger discussion about the isolation policy and appropriate uses of the Internet, the students voted to prohibit any of their number from maintaining a Facebook account. David Richter, who graduated in June and stuck around to help with the cattle for the summer, explained that the students felt that "Facebook is a part of the outside world that is frivolous and unserious and infringes on the purity of this place." The students' interest in politics extends mainly to the politics of themselves. Friday nights, they have Student Body (S.B.) meetings, where they use parliamentary rules to make all major decisions affecting their community. (A few years ago, a renegade decided to secede, and started holding "B.S." meetings in the boarding house.) A member of the Class of '04 described the experience as "being a member of the city, in the original sense of the 'city'—Aristotle's city. This is the way people should live, because here individuals are actually people."

The Deep Springs aesthetic prefers the broken to the fixed, the mangy to the groomed, the gone-to-seed to the still-in-bloom. Several years ago, students were irked when the wife of a former president planted flowers on the grounds. They dislike professors who use PowerPoint. The college was one of the last places in the country to use a crank phone and a toll station—it upgraded in the eighties—and when, about ten years ago, the phone company sent the students a big-screen television to reward them for spending so much on long-distance calls, a give-no-quarter faction, who called the thing a "giant teat" on which the weak were suckling, put it on a junk pile and attacked it with a sledgehammer. A normal truck at Deep Springs has dust caked in the vents, a half-ripped-out tape deck, exposed wires, and an orange peel on the floor. The shabbiness is somewhat a matter of budget—the school survives on $1.2 million a year—and somewhat a matter of style. "You wind up developing tastes that are totally out of synch with standard tastes," John Gravois, D.S. '97, said. "I'm still a little surprised when people don't want to do the more difficult thing."

Accordingly, most of the ranch work is done without pesticides or much modern machinery. "Today—'today' meaning in the outside world," a student said, comparing the school's obsolete irrigation system with that used in contemporary farming, and inadvertently revealing something about the Deep Springs conception of time. Every year, the ranch manager chooses one student to be cowboy, an honor that entails staying on for the summer after graduation and, with the previous year's cowboy, taking the herd into the mountains to graze. "The cowboys live like people lived a hundred years ago," Mitchell said. For the past few years, the cowboys, against their wishes, have been given a satellite phone for emergencies.

An exaltation of the past, in the context of short institutional memory (the community member with the most seniority is a horse named Chubby, who has been there some twenty-five years), can create the conditions for absurdity. One hot Sunday in May, a labor party was called to double-dig the garden beds, a method of aerating—shovel the soil from the bed, and then shovel it back in—that had been suggested a few years back by a Quaker student, and was now the rule. When a student asked a member of the garden crew what the point was, he shrugged and said, "The point of this is to fluff things up. Plants like things fluffy." Another garden-crew member instructed anyone who found an earthworm to put it in a heap where it could begin to compost kitchen scraps, and where a box of earthworms that had been delivered to the ranch had already been dumped. This sparked a heated back-and-forth about the worms' origin. ("They've *always* been here." "*No.* They were brought here.")

The dairy boys shared a joke in German, in a child's high falsetto, something about a duck, and a sweaty quiet settled in; a goose in a nearby yard sought shade beneath an apple tree. One student, taking a break, elaborated on the problem of holding on to traditions. "The trees," he said. "No one really agrees which one's which. The Tree of Sorrow was introduced to me as the Bodhisattva Tree. The tree at the end of field three is alternately called the Tree of Woe and the Tree of Sorrow. I'm in the Tree of Woe camp. The Tree of Sorrow and the Tree of Woe seem like names that could have been given because of the general loneliness factor, but I don't know."



"Oh, no, not another McCave."

Lucien Lucius Nunn was one of eleven children born to English immigrants living in Ohio. He had a twin, Lucius Lucien, who died at the age of three. Nunn wrote, "My lonely life, originating in and developed out of an unspeakable grief, deprived me of family and substituted therefore my young acquaintances." Indeed, Lucius's death has long been offered as an explanation for what came to be known among Nunn's followers as the "homosexual problem." Nunn's probable attraction to young men—he was "forever getting crushes on pink-cheeked hotel bellboys," one contemporary said—has been a source of some anxiety at Deep Springs. After Nunn died, his brother P.N. and others seem to have destroyed most of his correspondence, perhaps because they worried that it would tarnish his reputation, and Deep Springers still joke nervously about Nunn's interest in "the students' bodies." A box of his effects, housed in the Kroch collection at Cornell, suggests a sentimental, arrested man: a broken toy train, a nosegay of forget-me-nots. Brad Edmondson, D.S. '76, who lives in Ithaca and is working on a biography of Nunn, pointed out that until recently the box also held a piece of cake from the wedding of one of Nunn's favorite protégés.

Nunn's educational work began in earnest in 1904, at a plant in Olmsted, Utah, where he built an Arts and Crafts-style "institute" for his workers, and hired teachers to give classes in woodworking and wiring, as well as labs in alternating-current theory. Practical learning, Nunn believed, laid the foundation for intellectual and worldly accomplishment, and he wanted his employees to be more than "mere automatons or commercial slaves." In the Kroch collection, there are hundreds of photographs of the men Nunn educated. One series shows a young worker-scholar first in cowboy gear; then holding a catch of two fish at a lake; and, in another image, lying on his bed, a stack of books in the window, sketches tacked to the walls, and a pipe in his hand.

A few years later, Nunn established the Telluride House, at Cornell, a building architecturally similar to Olmsted, where his workers, after completing their "primary branch" training out West, could live for free while they carried on their "secondary branch" academic work. (Many of them returned to their jobs in the West when they were through.) According to a memoir written in 1933 by a former employee of Nunn, Stephen Bailey, Nunn wrote to P.N. about his hope "that the institution, small though it is, should grow as necessity indicates, the same as the tree, the man, or the empire,—the same as the British Empire has grown." In 1911, Nunn created the Telluride Association, a self-governing scholarship society, to administer funds to the branches; both the Cornell branch and the association still exist.

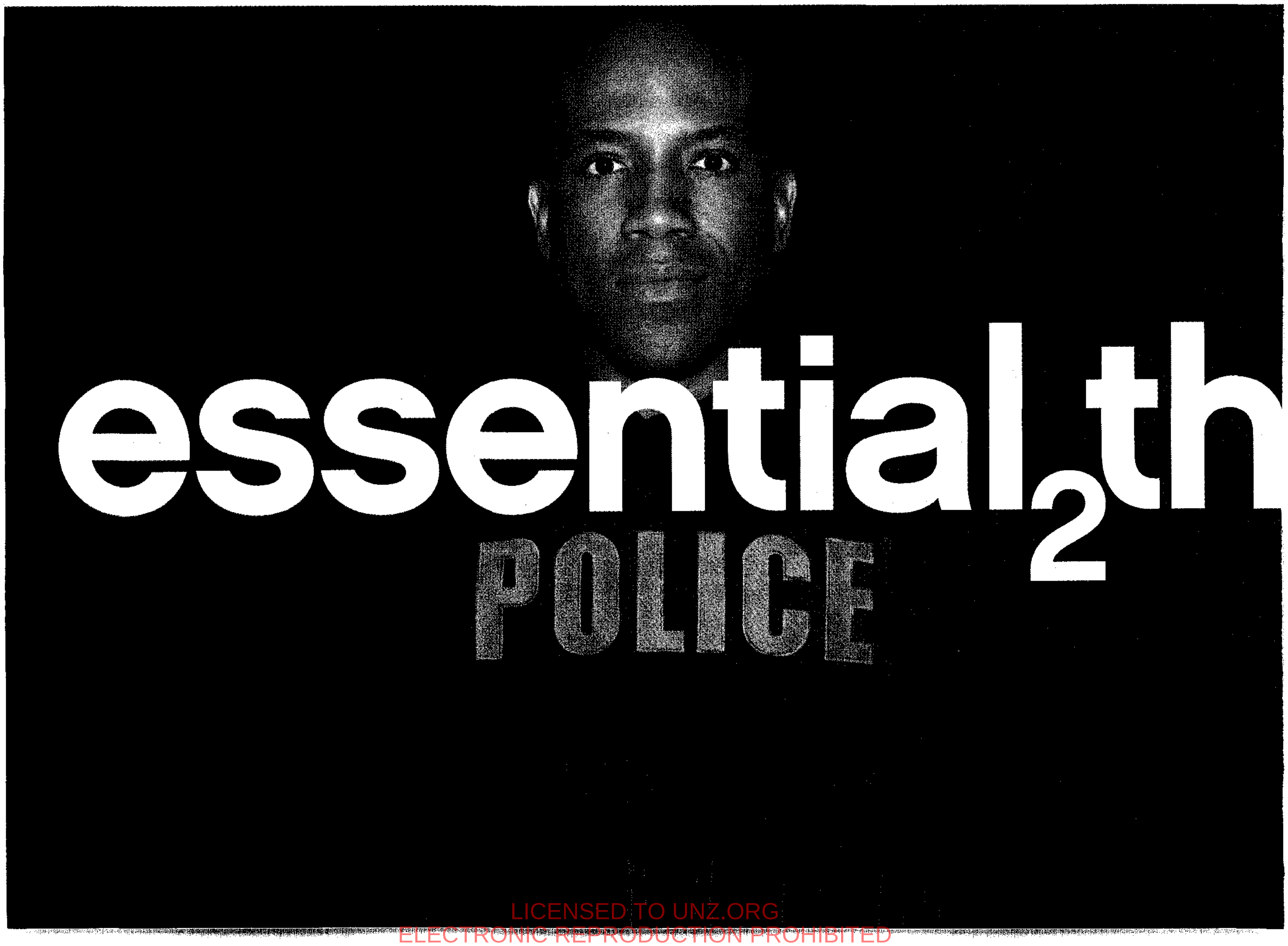
Like Nunn, Deep Springs has a lost twin whose memory has never quite been expunged. In the summer of 1916, Nunn bought a dilapidated plantation on the James River, in Claremont, Virginia—it had once belonged to Edgar Allan Poe's foster father—and sent a small group of young men there. The project failed. The biggest problem, in Nunn's opinion, was the proximity to town. He knew that neither he nor his educational plan could compete. Among his papers is a letter to a Claremont student: "I left because your members knew the intensity of my desire that they should progress along certain lines of conduct and because they ignored my wishes and left me for the pool room and the gossip of a little provincial town from which they could receive nothing worthwhile—because they weighed me and my love and devotion to them in the balance against their tobacco and self indulgences and found me wanting." By spring—after he had to pay for an abortion for a Claremont girl and many of the students had left to join the war effort—he closed the school, and shipped its furniture to California, where he had just bought the Deep Springs ranch.

By the time Nunn founded Deep Springs, he had, as his employees said, been "dying for years." He lived among the students as long as his health permitted, then moved to Los Angeles and communicated with them through letters that are by turns turgid, harsh, and, as his physical strength diminished, increasingly spiritual. On his visits to the college, he took most of his meals in his rooms, and when he wanted to go out was driven around the grounds in a Marmon limousine. He exhorted the students to uphold what he called "the Moral Order of the Universe," a concept that was as elusive to them as it is to students now. In his last letter to the student body, in January, 1925, Nunn wrote, "I have only one suggestion more, reverence the past of Deep Springs to just the extent which you respect the individual and the purpose which created it."

Nunn remains an ambiguous character at the school. Julian Petri, who graduated in June, said, "If you look in the S.B. minutes, you'll see Nunn being used to support arguments: Nunn says X, I take that to mean Y, so let's do Z. There is a sense that Nunn is at every S.B. meeting. There's a Nunn in all of us." There are, however, aspects of his teachings that they ignore. "We've replaced this theistic moral order with tamer things like community and service, which are vague enough," Aditya Tata, a current student, said. But, he added, "Nunn definitely looms." Above the garage, on the slope of a boulder-strewn mountain, is an old water tower, on which, a few months ago, two students painted Nunn's face, in Soviet-style black against a red background, with a single word: "Renounce!" The original idea had been to paint the Golden Arches and the words "I'm lovin' it"—"We would've annoyed a lot of people we wanted to annoy," one of the perpetrators told me—but he and his friend came up with Nunn as Lenin instead. "It's ironic in a whole number of ways."

In one essential regard, Deep Springs has obeyed its founder's edict. "Every major change at Deep Springs has been opposed by the students," Christopher Breiseth, who was the president from 1980 to 1983, said. "When they mechanized and got tractors instead of horses, in '37 or '38, the argument was that you could not possibly have the leadership development, the character development, that came from having to manage a team of horses while plowing the fields."

The reactionary strain in Nunn—the part of him that was ready to give up on the corrupted world—is the one most evident now, and the educational exper-



iment undertaken in the spirit of progress has come to exemplify the resistance to it. "When Nunn started the ranch, it was a normal ranch," Dave Hitz, who attended Deep Springs in the eighties and is now on the board of trustees, said. "It was not an archaic ranch, a historical throwback—it was a normal ranch for the time and place. What should Deep Springs be today?" Hitz, who has made a fortune in Silicon Valley, wonders particularly about the aversion to technology. "In arguments with students, I've said, 'You think you're staying the same, but the world's moving, so you're actually taking an aggressive step backward.'"

Deep Springs's form of repression—its all-male self-enclosure—allows its students to feel wildly, hedonically free. Sometimes they make themselves a little hut and go live alone, or they take up apiculture or paint their toenails. They build things, break things, play pranks, hike naked, seduce (or try to seduce) female faculty. "Two guys had been reading a lot of queer theory—it was the nineties—and there was some fairly persuasive talk of a homosexual continuum," a Deep Springer told me. "These two guys more or less argued themselves, on a strictly theoretical basis, into making out. It was not the practical success that it had been theoretically. You can read all the Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick you want without getting an erection." (Stranger things have happened: one alumnus described for me in vivid terms a Deep Springs crush he had on a cat—"She stalked around in a particularly female way; she never left scat in my room.")

Mostly, students say, the freedom lets them explore the boundaries of their own personalities. "Sex is only one version of the self-invention," an alumnus said. "There are other things—if you want to buy a pair of cowboy boots and a cowboy hat, walk in the desert and cry, be moved by it. These trial attempts to be one kind of man or another kind of man at Deep Springs need the safety and the sanctity of an all-male environment."

The shock of returning to the world of social norms can be profound. "Part of the difficulty of the transition was that Deep Springs is supposed to be an allegory for the wider world," John Gravois said. "And then when you get to the wider world you think of it as a shoddy allegory for Deep Springs. You're nostalgic for the thing that was supposed to prepare you for an engaged, generous, disciplined world outside. You realize you've become this very self-serious creature, obsessed with aesthetics—and if that's the case then it's just a really satisfying frat, and that's kind of amoral. It's helped you get an intuition for interconnectedness, but you have to start learning about people all over again—and definitely learning about women."

For women, certainly, Deep Springers' way of relating to one another can be irritating. A woman who was a member of a short-lived Telluride branch at the University of Chicago in the eighties remembered that the three Deep

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Springers there had nicknamed themselves the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. "The women in the house just rolled our eyes," she said. But there is also something refreshing about the kind of deprogramming that takes place. "In an environment where there are no women, men necessarily do 'womanish' things," Dorothy Fortenberry, a young playwright who is married to a Deep Springer, said. "In the time that my husband was there, he was a cook and an orderly, so he was basically cooking and cleaning. For two years, he performed both physical tasks and emotional tasks that were 'female'—being a good friend, and listening and crying—and I think it helped remove some of the gendering from those things."

In the fall of 1993, a young woman sent a postcard to Deep Springs. On one side was a picture of a cell and the word "Evolve"; on the back she wrote a short note that said, essentially, I am a woman, I'm going to apply to Deep Springs, and you're going to let me in. Her application arrived at the college in the midst of the second serious debate about coeducation—the first, in the late seventies, ended inconclusively and so rancorously that a motion was passed forbidding further discussion for at least five years—but, although a vocal faction on campus supported her admission, the board, meeting in 1994, narrowly voted against dismantling the all-male policy.

The basic reasoning behind Deep Springs's decision was that it couldn't afford to change: some generous alumni had made it known that they would stop contributing. But the subject of coeducation has created a fissure in the school's relationship with the Telluride Association, where women have been members for some forty-five years. In 1998, hoping to bring the institutions closer, a small group of Tellurid-ers and Deep Springers orchestrated a $1.8 million low-interest loan from the Telluride Association to Deep Springs for the renovation of the main building. The catch is that if Deep Springs hasn't changed its all-male policy by August 31, 2019, it will have to start repaying the money. Deep Springs is now working on a fund-raising strategy so that it won't find itself beholden to Telluride again.

WORLD'S BEST
CREEPY GUY UPSTAIRS

The original main building was razed to its foundation, destroying a black-widow-infested warren of student rooms with names like Love Loft, A Room of One's Mother's Own, and Nunn's Couch. When a new dorm was built, the students decried the "Benningtonization" of Deep Springs. Their short, ineffectual protest took the form of a hobo encampment, where they slept outside on old couches and ate sausages cooked over a barrel fire. "You were leaving a very storied, pregnant, *pregnant* place," Nathan Deuel, D.S. '97, said. "The new building is sterile, tiled, corporate-designed. It may take a few classes to figure out how to take the story back."

The arguments that have kept women from Deep Springs have changed over time. It used to be said that women couldn't handle the labor; now it is more often said that the young men couldn't handle the young women. William Masters, D.S. '79 and a trustee, told me, "There are now pairings and trios and courtships and rejections—but it's nothing like the passions you would see if you unleashed the full fury of adolescent love." Some, proudly invoking the school's radicalism—its experimental precariousness—and exhibiting the historic Deep Springs siege mentality, say they fear that adding women might upset an already delicate balance. Others think that it's important, in the homogenized field of higher education, to have an all-male option, and, less convincingly, that today's young men are underserved and need what help they can get.

Common to all these objections is the notion that women would be a distraction from the real work of Deep Springs. But what, exactly, is that work? Since its founding, the school has claimed that its mission is to form leaders, but after the nineteen-forties—the so-called Golden

Era, when Deep Springs produced a number of high-powered lawyers, diplomats, and a founder of the aid organization CARE International—there have been very few alumni of national stature. Academics and activists are far more common than C.E.O.s. Besides, it would be hard to find, among the free-thinking, progressive, post-gender men of Deep Springs, a person who would say that women aren't suited to all those roles.

The coeducation issue, Breiseth says, "has a Deep Springs logic to it." He would like to see the school admit women, and he believes it will, in time. "The conservatism of the place is part of its genius," he said. "It's what students have to learn—what is it you preserve, and what is your responsibility in preserving it? Ultimately, the coed debate has to negotiate that conservatism."

In July, the student cowboys were in a grassy valley at a spot called Robert's Ranch, about halfway up the mountain. Robert's Ranch was small and shacklike, about a century old, with a rickety porch slung with Western riding gear and tree limbs for support beams—the kind of place where a child would love to play. There was a copious bush of wild roses outside, and the smell of willow and manure in the air. A stream ran past the front—a saucepan wedged in the mud was for keeping drinks cold—and the cowboys had set up a corral. Six dark horses and a blond one called Creampuff grazed in the distance. "Deep Springs" was burned into the cabin door in squared-off capitals. Inside, the floorboards were crooked, and flies buzzed through torn plastic that covered the windows. A narrow shelf held books on birds and land management and cowboys, and a Nietzsche reader. Pans and kerosene lanterns hung from the ceiling, over a rutted table strewn with stuff ("Joy of Cooking," a black leather journal, a handle of Jim Beam), and a tiny wall calendar counted off the days. It was Day 11, and the cowboys were itching to move on to Dead Horse Meadow and then up to cow camp, at ten thousand feet.

Gareth Fisher, the senior cowboy, who went to Groton before Deep Springs and after graduation travelled around Spain and Australia instead of going to a university, made coffee at a little stove. He was quiet but not inhospitable. "Cowboy coffee is two pounds of water, two pounds of coffee, boil for two hours, drop a horseshoe in, and if it sinks it's not ready," he said, smiling. "This isn't that, but it's strong." He was wearing jeans and a heavy blue-and-black plaid lumberjack shirt. Before long, he had changed into a pale-blue button-down and put on a cowboy hat.

Fisher said that he thought Deep Springs would make coeducation work if it had to. "But I don't see the need to ruin something that is unique and uniquely possible here in an all-male environment," he said. "It's wonderful to spend two years just with guys. It allows for a kind of care and emotional openness that you might not have otherwise. You can feel a kind of love for a man, a brother. The masculine is the enframed—as Heidegger would say—the enframed referent of cowboying. But there's very much a feminine, female component of husbandry. You're living with the earth. All the cattle are women. There's a nurturing aspect to it. It's not all Copenhagen and bull riding. That is maybe an invention of the last century, this idea of a masculine man as the constantly gruff red-neck who doesn't know anything else."

Dan Bockrath, the junior cowboy, sat on a narrow cot, with tousled wool blankets and a comforter that depicted the solar system against a black background. I had first met him in May. He told me then that being at Deep Springs was about "the last ages of youth, playing in the woods a little longer, being a cowboy." He went on, "One of my classmates is getting married this summer—I'm going to be like a seven-year-old, living out the dream, with the costume and everything." Now, outside the confines of the valley, he seemed both less and more worldly—his hair and beard were wilder, curlier, and there was an aura of jailbreak about him. He said that he would be going to the University of Chicago in the fall. There was something uncannily familiar about the way he looked, rustic and rough-and-tumble—grimy white undershirt, battered cowboy boots—and within arm's reach of his bookshelf. It was easy to picture him in yellowing black-and-white, a photograph in Nunn's desk drawer. ◆

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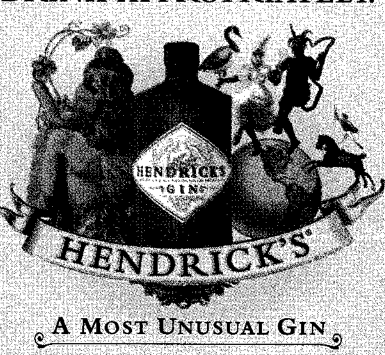

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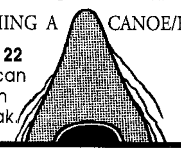

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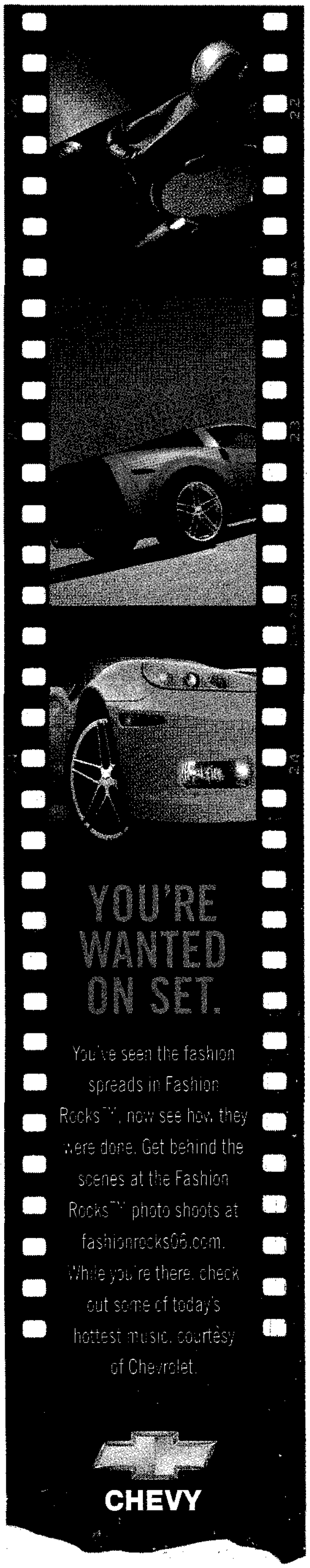

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CHEVY

IN THE KITCHEN

THE LUNCHROOM REBELLION

An haute-cuisine chef goes back to school.

BY BURKHARD BILGER

The lunch ladies of my elementary-school memories in Oklahoma are a stout, sweet-tempered breed. They wear cat's-eye glasses and have beauty-shop perms, with hairnets drawn taut across their foreheads. They have gray uniforms and dishwater complexions, and stand in line dolloping out grayish food—boiled okra, spinach with vinegar, corn bread and black-eyed peas—smiling wearily, as if they knew that they were slowly killing us. I'm not sure what they would think of Ann Cooper, the new executive chef of the Berkeley public schools, in California. I suspect that she would make them nervous.

Cooper, who calls herself "the Renegade Lunch Lady," was hired last fall to revamp the city's dismal school-lunch program. She is small and tightly wound, with shoulders bunched from lifting weights. She has bright, defiant eyes, unruly brown hair, and a raspy alto that tends to break when she gets excited. In the kitchen, she moves with quick, stiff-legged strides, nipping at heels, barking out instructions, and sending her large, slow-moving colleagues into bewildered stampedes. She is, in short, a typical chef, landed in a world where real cooking is almost unknown.

Cooper is quick to admit that she's making the worst food of her life. In her twenties, she attended the Culinary Institute of America and cooked on cruise ships. In her thirties, she owned her own restaurant, in Telluride, and was named an "up-and-coming chef" by *Gourmet*. In her forties, she transformed the Putney Inn, in Vermont, into a bastion of New American cuisine. Now, at fifty-two, Cooper has ended up where most chefs wouldn't deign to begin: in an under-staffed, under-equipped cafeteria, trying to wean four thousand children from deep-fried chicken nuggets. "I spent my whole career making fancy food for rich people," she says. "I've cooked for Hillary Clinton and Emmylou Harris, Jimmy Buffet and the Grateful Dead. I don't want to do that anymore."

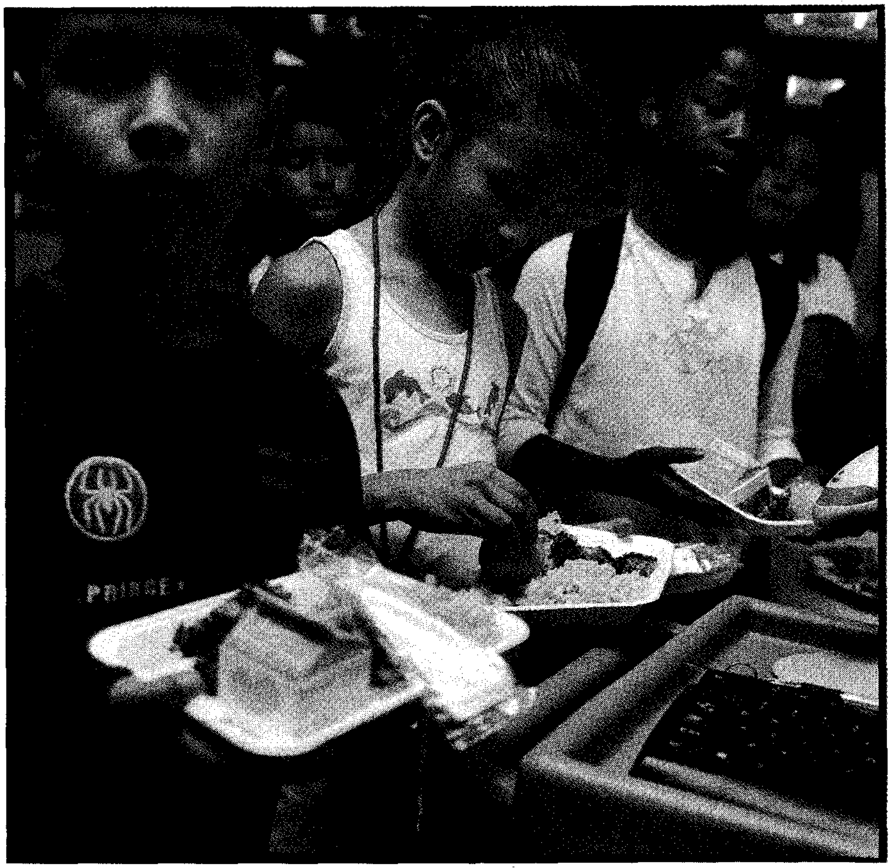
Cooper's first experience with cafeteria cooking was of a more utopian sort. In 1999, her work at the Putney Inn caught the attention of Courtney Sale Ross, the wealthy widow of a former chairman of Time Warner. Ross had founded a school for fifth to twelfth graders in East Hampton, New York. It had a progressive, ecologically minded curriculum, and she wanted its food to be equally enlightened. "At first, I said, 'No way! I'm a chef, not a lunch lady!'" Cooper recalls. But when Ross showed her the school's new, ten-million-dollar Wellness Center, where students could do yoga or dine overlooking a forest of silvery pines, Cooper agreed. Over the next few years, she hired a local poet-farmer to grow organic vegetables and sent students to help with the harvest. She lured sous-chefs from French and Asian restaurants in New York and wrote recipes linked to the curriculum—a feast of fifteenth-century dishes, for instance, for a course on the Renaissance. She made celery-root soup and green gazpacho, Caprese salad and fennel stew, and the children cleaned their plates, after a little cajoling.

People used to joke that the Ross School had the best restaurant in the Hamptons. Martha Stewart filmed a segment of her television show there, and a magazine for Lexus owners ran a story on it entitled "Haute Cafeteria." But although Cooper had hoped that other cafeterias would adopt some of her methods, few could afford to do so. Elsewhere in America, one in five schools was selling fast food and less than half had working kitchens. The country was in the midst of an epidemic of childhood obesity, the Surgeon General had declared, yet eighty per cent of school lunches contained more fat than federal guidelines allowed. "I got tired of everyone telling me that what I was doing could only be done at the Ross School," Cooper says.

Berkeley is her first attempt at cooking for the masses—at making private-school lunches on a public-school budget—but she is hardly alone anymore. America is suddenly full of people who want to save school lunch: celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver, who exposed the sorry state of British cafeterias two years ago and has threatened to do the same in New York; guerrilla documentarians like Morgan Spurlock, who championed healthful lunches in "Super Size Me"; and a swelling horde of angry parents, crusading cafeteria directors, and politicians with bitter lunchroom memories of their own. Last year, more than two hundred bills in forty states sought to ban sodas and junk food from schools, and in May the major beverage companies voluntarily agreed to remove non-diet drinks by the fall of 2009. Bill Clinton, whose foundation helped broker the deal, called it "courageous."

Still, expelling junk food won't do much to improve school cafeterias. In East Hampton, Cooper had twenty-seven employees for five hundred diners; in Berkeley, she has fifty-three for four thousand. In East Hampton, Cooper spent about twelve dollars per day, per child on breakfast and lunch. In Berkeley, she spends three and a half dollars for the same two meals. Can a decent lunch be made for so little? And, if so, will anyone eat it?

The Central Kitchen of the Berkeley Unified School District lies on a quiet side street in northwest Berkeley not far from the city's foothills. It was built in the nineteen-fifties, as part of Jefferson Elementary School, and has survived periodic upheavals from desegregation, bilingual education, No Child Left Behind, and the Loma Prieta earthquake. The kitchen occupies a dingy, high-ceilinged room. It smells of stale bread and disinfectant, and is populated by hulking industrial machines: a steam kettle, a sautéing vat, a pair of convection ovens, and a Hobart mixer with a vaguely menacing air, like the hooded mother beast in "Aliens." There is no blender, no food processor, no stovetop or grill, yet the kitchen produces food for thirteen of the city's sixteen schools, including all eleven of its elementary schools. (The other schools have their own kitchens, which Cooper also oversees.)



Malcolm X elementary school in Berkeley, California. Photograph by Thomas Kern.

LOOKATONLINE

On a Tuesday morning in May, the menu called for meat loaf—four thousand servings of it, with mashed potatoes and oven-roasted squash. In the kitchen's walk-in refrigerator, thirty cylinders of government-supplied ground beef, each two feet long, five inches in diameter, and ten pounds in weight, awaited Cooper's attention. She heaved two of them onto her shoulders and dropped them on a butcher-block counter. "Now you can see why I lift weights," she said, then took a swig from a protein shake. She'd had braces put on her teeth in January to fend off gum disease, and this was the only breakfast that wouldn't stick to them. "It's a chef's worst nightmare," she said.

Cooper had been up since three-thirty, and cooking since five. She lives alone in a rented house in Moss Beach, an hour's drive to the south, and commutes to Berkeley every day before dawn. Her crew is usually there when she arrives. The assistant chef, Alan Lyman, an amiable Englishman with the shape and blush of a Bartlett pear, was making a tub of coleslaw. He had spent ten years cooking in British hospitals and twelve in the Berkeley schools, but he was still getting used to Cooper's pace. Across from him, a team of eight black and Hispanic workers was scooping chicken and noodles into take-out trays. The group was led by Cecelia Adams, the kitchen manager, a middle-aged black woman with a deep, easy voice and an unflappable manner. Because the other schools lacked proper kitchens, the food had to be prepared well in advance. The chicken had been made on Monday for Wednesday's lunch; the meat loaf would be served on Thursday; and a truck outside was unloading Friday's lunch—tamales and enchiladas made by a local company. Cooper had met the owners at a stand at a farmers' market. "Do you think you could make four thousand of these a week?" she'd asked.

To make the meat loaf, Cooper dumped the tubes of beef into the Hobart's bowl, then added ingredients one by one. The full recipe called for three hundred pounds of meat, seven and a half pounds of bread crumbs, three gallons of milk, ten pounds each of beaten eggs and Parmesan cheese, twenty pounds each of diced onions and shredded carrots, and nearly four pounds of garlic and spices. Cooper worked in batches, calculating the proportions as she went. She has always had a good head for numbers: growing up in Hingham, Massachusetts, she was kicked out of high school twice for smoking pot, but she passed her equivalency tests in a day when she needed them for culinary school. When she had finished adding ingredients, she set the dough hook spinning. "They never would have served meat loaf here before," she said. Why not? I asked. "Because it's food."

She looked around for Adams, who was shuttling a row of take-out trays through a shrink-wrapping machine. "Cecelia! Get me one of those things you used to serve!" Adams gave her a long, heavy-lidded look. Like most of the staff, she had little formal training as a cook, but she'd worked in the schools for seventeen years and was getting tired of being reminded of her deadly, grease-dispensing history. She trudged off to the freezer and back, then thumped a rectangular object on the counter. Cooper pounced on it. "El Extremo Burrito!" she shouted. She flipped it over and pointed to the ingredients list, a block of small-faced type six inches wide and an inch deep. "They'd go into the oven just like that," she said. "They didn't even get opened until the kids ate them."

When Cooper took charge of the Central Kitchen last fall, she began by banning heat-and-serve dishes. She then made a list of undesirable ingredients—transfats, preservatives, and foods with too much salt, refined flour, sugar, or high-fructose corn syrup—and began looking for substitutes. White bread gave way to whole wheat, canned fruits and vegetables to fresh, and generic hot dogs and hamburgers to ones made from grass-fed beef. "Those changes anyone can do," she said. "I banned chocolate milk. Easy. I only accepted hormone-free milk. I banned vending machines. I banned fried foods. That is not brain surgery. The hard part is to get back to scratch cooking, and getting around the commodity program."

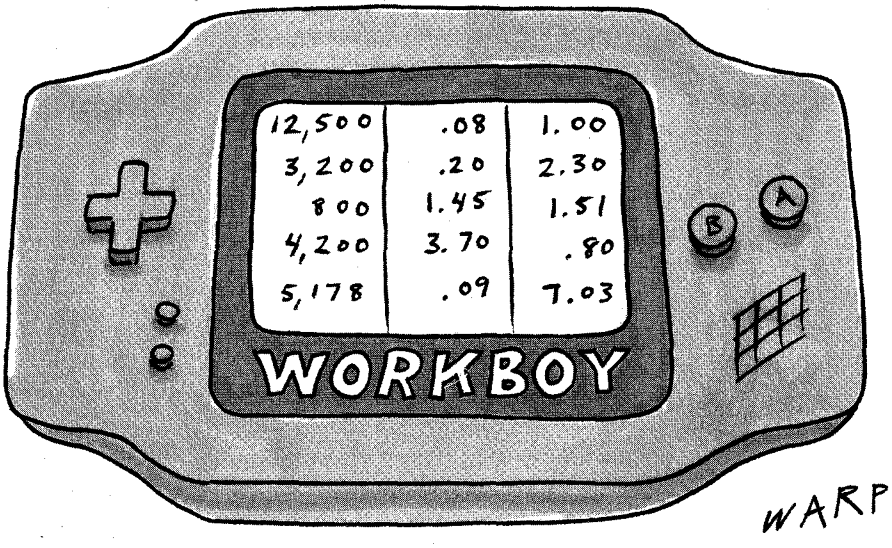
Every year, the federal government buys nearly a billion dollars' worth of raw and processed foods and sends them to schools for free. Many schools then have some of the food sent to plants to be turned into ready-made dishes. The commodity program provides about twenty per cent of the food in cafeterias. Last year, schools got about seven hundred million dollars' worth of meat and dairy products, and less than two hundred and fifty million dollars' worth of vegetables. Cooper blames this imbalance on the Department of Agriculture, which uses the program to buy up farm surpluses and stabilize prices. "The U.S.D.A. is the marketing arm for agribusiness," she said. "It's responsible for the national organic standards, and it's responsible for school lunch. How many ways can you say conflict of interest?" Yet schools are free to choose their own commodities, and they can fill their quota with vegetables and other nutritious staples. The real problem for Cooper was that the items must be ordered months in advance, so she was still using food chosen by her predecessor, now the food-service director for a prison system.

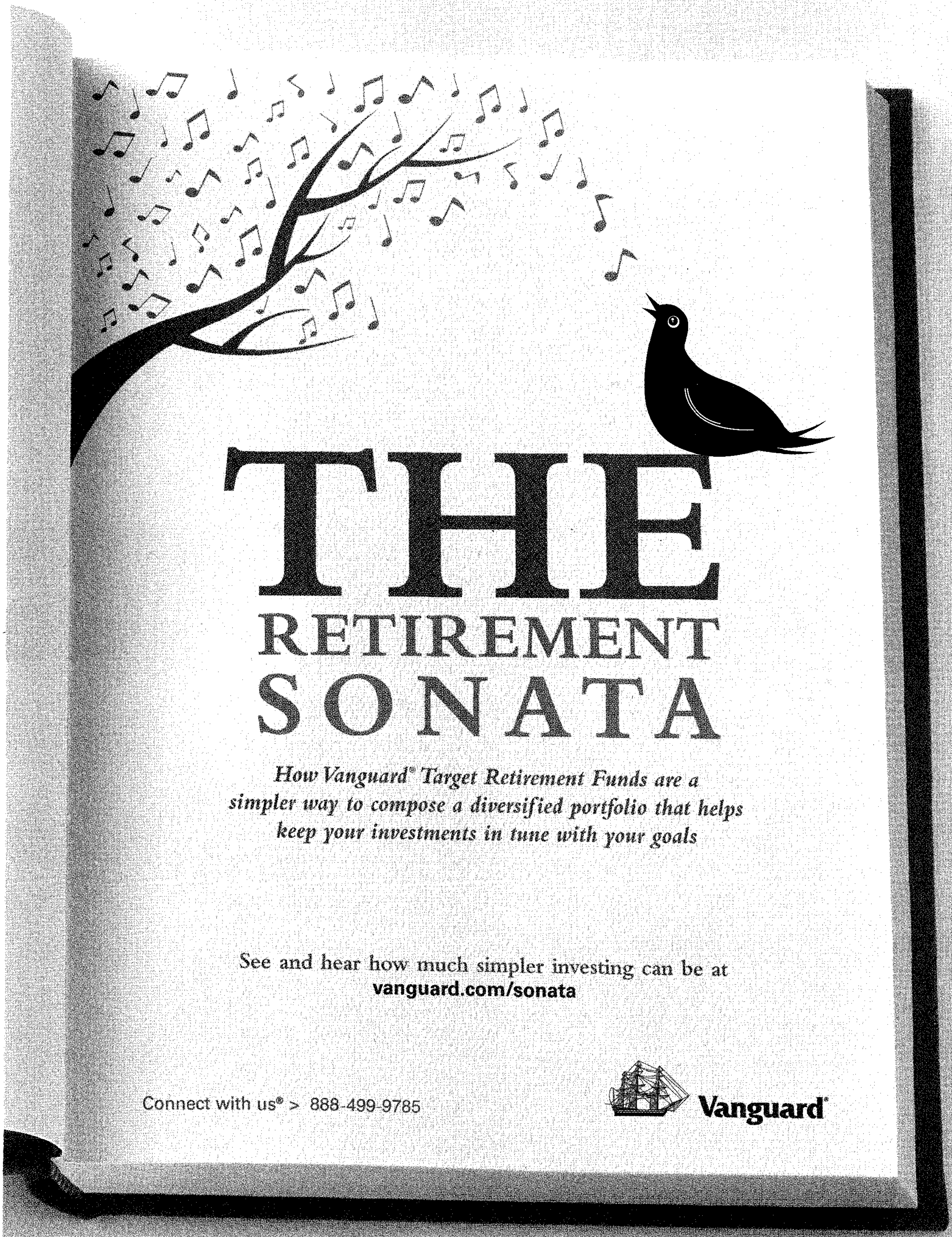
"Look at this printout!" Cooper said, flourishing a long list of processed cheese, canned fruits, and condiments, laden with sugar and salt. Cooper couldn't afford to throw out those items, so she tried to incorporate them into more nutritious dishes: "beef crumbles" went into spaghetti sauce, croutons into turkey stuffing, canned peas into split-pea soup, and canned apricots into a barbecue sauce. Just that week, she'd received twenty-six cases of cranberry sauce and eighteen cases of lo mein noodles. "Oh, what are we going to do with it?" she said. "I don't want to use any more shitty food."

The answer was coleslaw. When Lyman had filled a five-gallon tub with shredded cabbage and carrots, raisins, salt, and apple-cider vinegar, Cooper came over with a can of the cranberries. "It'll be like a sweet vinaigrette," she said, without much conviction. She measured out a pound of the sauce on a scale, dumped it into the tub, then slipped on a pair of rubber gloves and mixed it with her hands. When she was finished, the coleslaw looked as if someone had bled into it. "Ah, that's lovely," Lyman said after he'd tasted it. "But I do think it needs a little more salt."

Feeding four thousand on a public-school budget is at best a loaves-and-fishes affair, and at worst the equivalent of a bad casserole—full of dubious proteins cleverly disguised. The federal government subsidizes meals according to a sliding scale: schools get two dollars and forty cents per lunch served to the poorest students, and as little as twenty-three cents for more affluent students. In Berkeley, the state contributes another fifty cents or so, but it doesn't add up to much. "It's impossible," Cooper said. "It's egregious. It makes me want to cry." But she's lucky to get any subsidies at all.

In 1946, when the National School Lunch Program was first proposed to Congress, the country still had fresh memories of the Depression, when children sometimes fainted from hunger in class. Yet plenty of politicians were leery of paying for their food with federal dollars. "It was a highly improbable program," Janet Poppendieck, a sociologist at Hunter College who is writing a book on school lunch, told me. "Congress was looking at one of the largest deficits in national history—two hundred and eighty billion, in yesterday's dollars—and it was full of articulate conservatives





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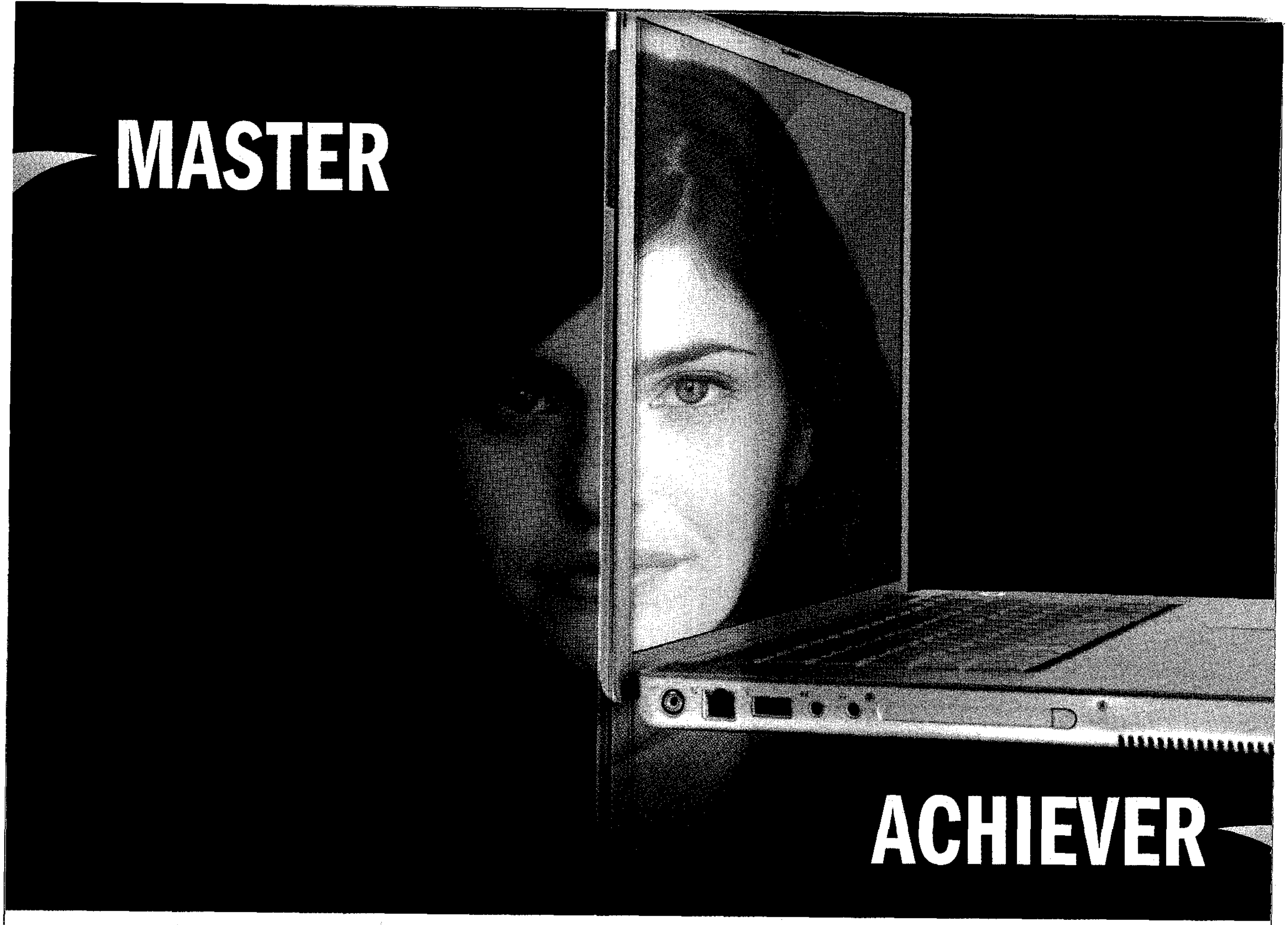

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who wanted to shrink government." No one wanted to take lunches away from needy boys and girls, the Republican whip at the time, Leslie Arends, declared. But, he added, "the greatest thing that we can hand down to our children is a solvent government." The bill was finally signed by President Truman as "a measure of national security." The country didn't need healthier students, it seemed, so much as stronger soldiers: more than a third of the conscripts who failed the Army's physicals had been malnourished at one time.

During the next thirty years, the program went from subsidizing seven million meals a day to twenty-seven million, and its annual budget grew to more than three billion dollars. Then, in 1981, Ronald Reagan appointed David Stockman as his budget director. Stockman had a simple plan for cutting subsidies: he redefined "lunch." A nutritious meal would now have to provide only an ounce and a half of protein instead of two, six ounces of milk instead of eight, and half a cup of vegetables instead of three-quarters—a quarter cup of which could be a condiment. To show how this would look on a plate, Patrick Leahy served his colleagues in the Senate a mock school lunch. It consisted of a silver-dollar-size burger on half a bun, a box of milk, a squirt of ketchup, and six grapes.

The Reagan Administration withdrew the new guidelines after thousands of letters of protest were sent to the Department of Agriculture. But funding for child nutrition still fell by nearly a billion and a half dollars. (The Carter Administration had previously cut it by four hundred million.) Grants for kitchen equipment were eliminated, forcing districts like Berkeley to move their cooks into centralized facilities, and most schools couldn't afford to cover their cafeterias' losses. They needed them to turn a profit. "The gospel was preached that cafeterias should be operated like a business, and students as customers," Poppendieck says. And these customers wanted sodas and snacks.

In the late nineteen-eighties, when my former high school started offering Coca-Cola and Mazzio's pizza alongside regular lunches, I was more jealous than appalled. Fast food had yet to be demonized, fat kids were still just fat—not the tragic victims of an obesity epidemic—and name-brand pizza sounded a lot better than the cartilaginous stews we'd been served. Even in pure business terms, though, the new foods were often a failure. The more snacks and sodas students bought from vending machines or fast-food lines, the less they spent on regular lunches. Two years ago, when Texas banished junk food from its elementary schools and tightened nutrition requirements for all grades, cafeteria sales increased so much that the state received an extra fifty million dollars in federal subsidies—more than compensating for the loss in vending-machine revenue.

Berkeley first tried to reform its cafeterias in 1999, calling for salad bars in every school and organic vegetables for all. Like many of the city's social campaigns, the effort was both pioneering and impractical. It drew mocking news coverage nationwide—the Washington *Post* accused locals of liking "to brag about how progressive they are"—and the salads disappeared as soon as the grants that paid for them ran out.

When Cooper was hired, last fall, after working with the cafeterias for a year as a consultant, her plan was to rebuild the system from the inside out. She wanted not only to improve the food but also to create a step-by-step manual for lunchroom reform nationwide—complete with recipes, menu cycles, and staffing and ordering guides. But she answers to three masters in Berkeley: the school district is her official employer; the U.S.D.A. subsidizes her meals; and the Chez Panisse Foundation pays her salary (ninety-five thousand dollars, plus benefits, a year). The first needs her to stay within budget; the second insists that she conform to its dietary standards; the third wants her to hurry up and start a revolution. She may yet fail on every front. "We've got union issues. We've got kitchens that don't cook. We've got the same shit everybody else has," she says. "This is the reality of school food."

Tuesday is pizza day at the Malcolm X elementary school. When the second graders arrive for lunch, they bounce up and down and do little dances in line, chanting, "Oh, pizza! Oh, pizza! Oh, pizza! Oh, pizza!" The school has four hundred students, from kindergarten through the fifth grade. About a fourth of the students are white, a fourth are Asian and Hispanic, and close to half are black, and for many lunch is the best meal of the day. Berkeley's wealth, like its houses, is distributed on a steeply inclined plane, with the poor clustered below and the rich perched high in the hills. People at the two extremes have a twenty-year difference in life expectancy, a study in 2000 found. About forty per cent of the city's students are eligible for subsidized meals. At Malcolm X, the children wear bar-coded payment cards around their necks, so that no one can tell who pays full price. They get a slice of pizza, some grapes or an orange, and the pick of a salad bar that Cooper recently installed, then hold their cards up to the scanner.

Cooper doesn't have a problem with pizza. When it's made right, it contains vegetables, protein, fibre, and calcium—a full meal. "A slice of pizza isn't bad for you," she says. "A diet of pizza is bad for you." When she first arrived, the cafeteria's pizza came in bags, like its burritos. The Central Kitchen had neither the staff nor the equipment to make it, so Cooper hired Karen Trilevsky, an old friend who owns FullBloom Baking Company, in nearby Menlo Park. Trilevsky put her staff to work in her test kitchen for the next three months, then called Cooper in for a tasting. The FullBloom pizza had a thick focaccia crust made with spelt and whole-wheat flour. It had homemade tomato sauce, skim-milk mozzarella, and a variety of sophisticated vegetarian toppings: zucchini, corn, and fresh tomato; blue cheese, walnut, and roasted onion. "It was fabulous," Cooper recalls. "It was fresh. It was delicious."

The kids couldn't stand it. The toppings were weird, they said, the crust too bready, the cheese too brown and not cheesy enough. At Malcolm X and the other ten elementary schools, the trash cans overflowed with rejected slices. "It was across the board," Cooper says. The cooks at FullBloom tried chopping the vegetables into tiny pieces; the complaints continued. They tried hiding the vegetables beneath the cheese; the children rooted them out. Finally, in January, the cafeteria manager from Malcolm X came to Cooper's office with a tersely worded petition ("We do not like the veggie pizzas, nor do we like the pork roast with applesauce. . . .") and a large sheet of butcher paper signed by more than two hundred students. Cooper hung it beside her desk, beneath a line of Tibetan prayer flags. In the bottom left corner, a girl named Shalika had drawn a frowny face. Next to that, her classmate Tajahniqua had written, "Veteteriyin pizza. I hate that food."

Two weeks later, Cooper put on her chef's whites and went to face her critics. They marched into the Malcolm X auditorium in three shifts, during recess, and listened politely to her explanations. Then they raised their hands and began the inquisition. "What happened to the double hamburgers?" "Why haven't we had orange chicken lately?" "Where are our nachos?" Cooper told them that there was hardly any chicken in the orange chicken and no real cheese in the nacho sauce, but they didn't care. "They were really pissed off," she says. "I took away all the crap they liked."

Children can learn to eat almost anything, given time. In Mexico, they consume fiery chilies; in Japan, whale meat; in Sweden, pickled herring. But a palate, once formed, isn't easily expanded. At Penn State, the psychologist Leann Birch has tracked the eating habits of a hundred and sixty girls between the ages of five and fifteen, as well as various tortured attempts to improve their diets. The most common ploys tend to backfire: forbidding sweets instills a craving for them, and insisting on vegetables can instill an aversion. Labelling foods as "healthy" makes them taste worse to children, and offering sweets as rewards for eating vegetables makes the latter seem even less appetizing. (Birch also tried offering vegetables as rewards for eating sweets, but the children just laughed at her.) Peer pressure sometimes helps. When Birch had kids who hated peas eat at tables surrounded by kids who loved peas, the pea-haters switched sides within a week. But cafeterias tend to breed complainers. At the Ross School, Cooper served three or four entrées a day, two desserts, and two kinds of pizza baked in a brick oven. Yet a month after she arrived she was cornered by a gang of sulky fifth graders. They were going on hunger strike, they told her, until they got their grilled-cheese sandwiches back.

The best way to broaden a child's palate is to start early. When mothers eat garlic or carrots while pregnant, recent studies have shown, their newborns have a taste for those flavors as well, and breast-fed babies tend to be less picky about solid food than bottle-fed babies. By the age of four or five, almost all children become "neophobic": they develop an aversion to new foods, and to vegetables in particular—an ancestral memory, perhaps, of too many poisonous plants eaten by children in the past. To overcome this instinct, preschools in Minneapolis, New York, and other cities have lately experimented with hand puppets, gardening and cooking programs, and color-coded vegetable charts. But there's no real substitute for patience; the average five-year-old has to taste a new food between five and ten times, Birch has found, before he'll accept it.

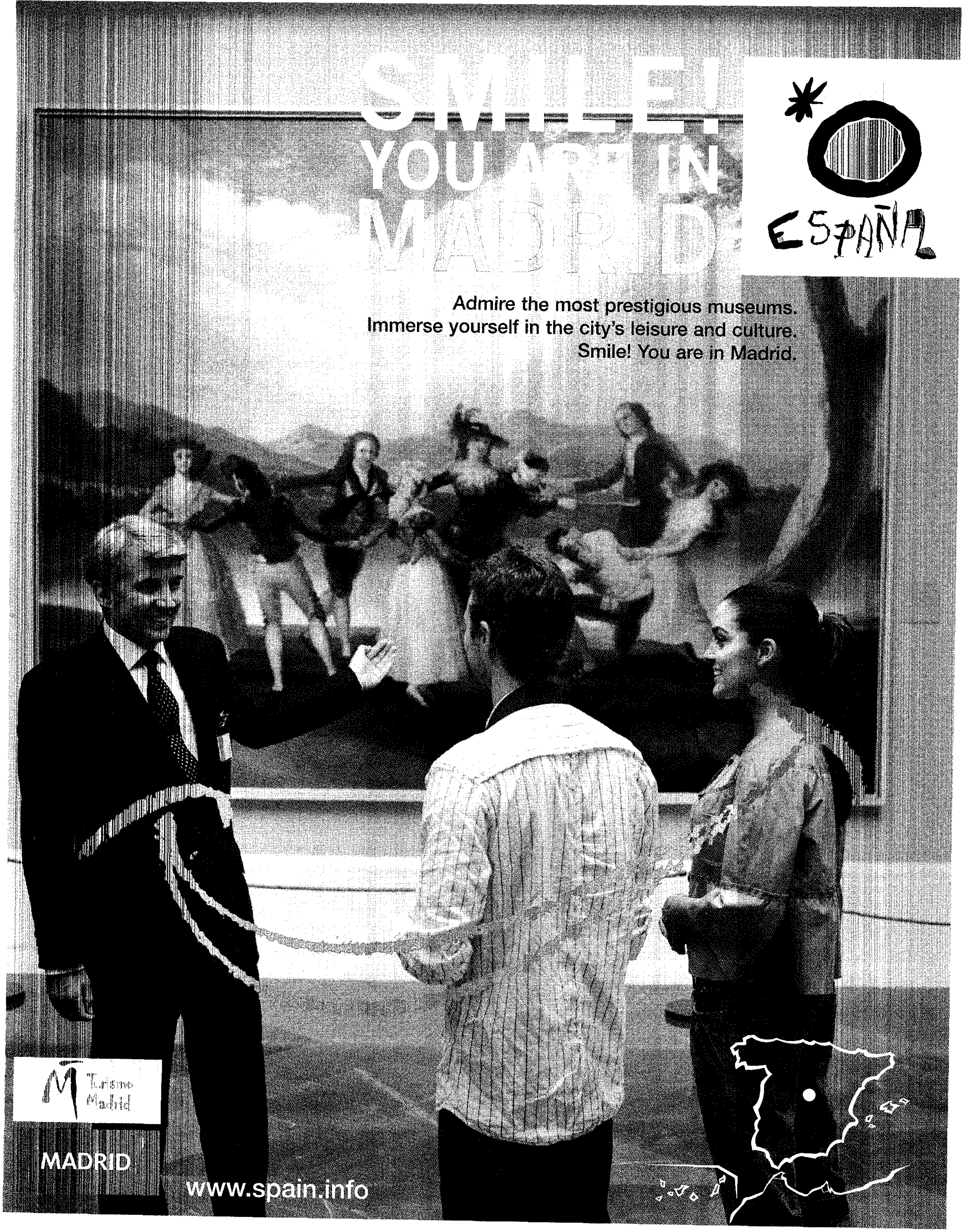
At the Ross School, Cooper could afford to wait: within a year, her students were happily eating jicama. In Berkeley, she had no food to waste. And so, in the month after the meeting at Malcolm X, the veggie pizza was slowly stripped bare. "They would call every week and say, 'Take off the zucchini. Take off the corn. Take off the fresh tomatoes,' " a manager at FullBloom told me. "Within three weeks, all the vegetables were gone." The crust was still rich in protein and fibre, and the cooks pureed some squash, carrots, and other vegetables into the sauce, where even the students' X-ray eyes couldn't detect them. But by and large the pizza began to look like pizza again.

The second graders at Malcolm X had made their peace with it. Across town, though, the fourth graders at John Muir were unconvinced. Not having had a meeting with Cooper, they blamed the food on their new principal, Mr. John, whom they suspected of being a vegetarian. "It's all vegetable," a small, apple-cheeked girl named Melika told me. She hunched her shoulders and shook her ropy braids: "Oooooooooo! That principal get on my nerves!" Her tall, skinny friend Naeemah was of two minds. The food was better for you, she said, now that it wasn't extruded by "this big machine thing" anymore. But the pizza was still overcooked, and she missed all the meat from last year. She picked at her pink coleslaw. "I'm moving to Texas," she said.

The low point of Cooper's lunchroom crusade came in February. She had always known that her food costs would go up, but she had hoped that her revenues would rise as well. Fewer than half of the district's ten thousand students ate school lunches: most of the high-schoolers went off campus, to places like Top Dog and Extreme Pizza, and many of the middle- and grade-schoolers brought their lunch. If Cooper could lure a few hundred of them back to the cafeteria, she would be able to pay for a lot of organic vegetables. By late winter, however, she was tens of thousands of dollars over budget, and cafeteria attendance had yet to go up. Then came the inspectors.

The Department of Agriculture has devised a welter of well-meaning regulations over the years to insure that schools serve healthful lunches. Its original scheme, which is still used by most schools, is known as "food-based menu planning." It requires that elementary-school lunches contain at least six hundred and sixty-four calories and portions of meat, grains, milk, and fruit or vegetables. Less than thirty per cent of the calories can come from fat, but carbohydrates are unrestricted. This has led to some predictable perversities. Corn and French fries are by far the most popular vegetables in schools, followed by other potato dishes. To keep fat down, schools often ban whole milk and deep-fried foods, only to find that they're not serving enough calories. "It's really an Alice in Wonderland situation," the sociologist Janet Poppendieck told me. "They can increase the size of entrées, but it's hard to do that without increasing the fat. They would like to increase the vegetables, but that they can't afford. So they end up adding dessert. Or they sweeten the milk with strawberry or chocolate. They've taken the fat out of it, then put the calories back in with sugar."

In the mid-nineties, the U.S.D.A., led by a former health activist named Ellen Haas, introduced a more flexible alternative called "nutrient-based menu planning." Cafeterias could make almost anything they liked, as long as a week's worth of meals contained all the necessary nu-



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m terpieces of Madrid

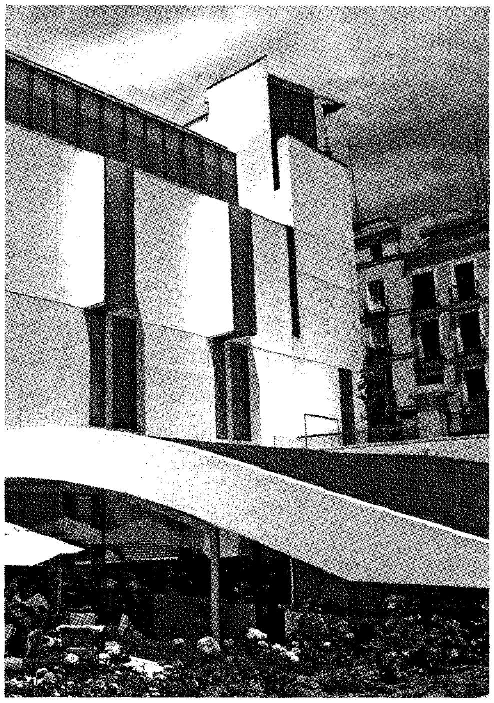
The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 8 Paseo del Prado, is open from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M. Tuesday through Sunday. Through September 10th, "From Cranach to Monet: Masterpieces from the Pérez Simón Collection." For more information, go to museothyssen.org.

Unique among Madrid's Golden Triangle museums, which include the Prado and Reina Sofia, the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** stands out for its single-minded point of view. Its core collection, acquired by Spain in 1993, is made up of some eight hundred paintings that once belonged to the industrialist Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza. The Baron's collection is presented chronologically, beginning with an emotion-filled portrait of St. Peter by Simone Martini, painted in the early fourteenth century. Each piece further draws you in to the bold intelligence of the collector, who once claimed that his main criterion for buying a painting was whether he enjoyed looking at it.

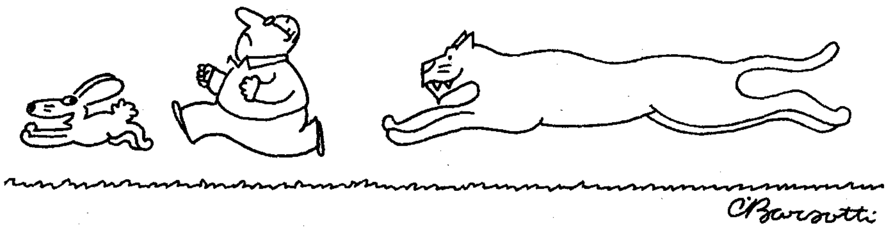
Among the many Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works that captured the Baron's gaze were portraits by Manet, Morisot, and Degas, along with landscapes by Monet, Gauguin, and van Gogh. His love of color is evident in selections by Vlaminck, Braque, and Kandinsky. The collection allows its viewers to travel from the Renaissance humanism of Messina's "Portrait of a Man" to the solitude of Edward Hopper's "Hotel Room." By the time visitors arrive at Lucian Freud's portrait of the Baron himself, they will appreciate his contemplative mien.

The Palacio de Villahermosa, a neoclassical-style structure once used by the Prado for temporary exhibitions, was renovated by Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Rafael Moneo to give the artwork a warm setting that is at once modern and stately. A wing added in 2004 displays the collection of the Baron's widow, Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza, which includes Rodin sculptures commissioned by the Baron's grandfather.

The passion for painting evident throughout the museum is aptly expressed in the upcoming exhibition **Sargent/Sorolla**, running from October 3rd through January 8th, 2007. Artists John Singer Sargent and Joaquin Sorolla were contemporaries and friends. Importantly, they were also a link from nineteenth-century naturalism to modern art. Two not-to-be-missed paintings in this exhibition are Sargent's "Venetian Onion Seller" (1882) and Sorolla's "Courtyard of the Sorolla House" (1917; the Madrid house in the painting is now a museum). With "Sargent/Sorolla," visitors can appreciate even more deeply the world captured by these two artists.



TOP: ©JAVIER AZURMENDI; BOTTOM: ©CARLOS DOMINGUEZ/CORBIS



"What about your precious opposable thumbs now?"

trients. If Monday's lunch was heavy on beef, Tuesday's could be a stir-fry. The only drawback was that every recipe had to be entered into a database so that its ingredients could be broken down into vitamins, minerals, protein, and so on. The most common ingredients and processed foods were preloaded in the software, but Cooper was cooking from scratch and reworking recipes continually. She didn't have time to analyze her dishes before serving them. So she didn't bother. She hired a consultant to enter the recipes as she perfected them, but otherwise kept cooking. "I never met a rule I didn't want to break," she says. "Especially stupid rules."

The three inspectors who came to Cooper's office in February weren't pleased with this attitude. They asked to see her recipes and her analyses. She did not have them. They asked how she knew that the children were getting enough calories. She said, "Have you looked at the obesity rate?" They told her that she was not in compliance and was in danger of losing her federal subsidies. "I felt like a comet slamming into the side of a mountain," she told me.

Cooper's friend Kate Adamick, a corporate lawyer turned cafeteria consultant, sat in on one of the meetings. "I listened for a while, as they told Ann that she was doing everything wrong, that they were going to have to shut her down, and they hadn't even tasted the food," Adamick told me. "So I stepped in and said, 'Would you rather Ann had spent a year getting the paperwork in place and then improved the food?' And they said, 'Yes.' I said, 'But the food they were serving was terrible!' And one of the women said, 'That is not true. They were using commodity foods.'"

As it happened, Adamick had recently attended a trade show in Los Angeles and had some pictures of the newest products being made for schools out of U.S.D.A. commodities. She called them up on the screen of her laptop one by one: corn dogs, pizza strips, and deep-fried cherry pies; grilled-cheese sandwiches, Texas cheese toast, and breaded chicken treats molded into hearts and moons and stars. "Look! Fried things in shapes!" Cooper joked, when she showed me the slides later. But, at the time, she was on the verge of losing her job. "Ann is basically fearless," Adamick says. "I've never seen her intimidated by anything, ever. But these women made her seriously nervous. She would say, 'We have a meeting with the mean people and they're going to put me in jail.' "

As usual, Cooper's cooking proved to be her most convincing defense. When the inspectors returned in March to examine the cafeterias, their attitude softened noticeably. Their report cited dozens of administrative and food-service infractions—"[the children] received 1/2 kiwi instead of the specified '1 each' "—but noted that the food was "very high quality and was visually pleasing as well as tasty." Cooper was given until November to fix the problems. "They could have made my life miserable," she told me. "They could have given me forty-five days to come into one-hundred-per-cent compliance, and in the end they didn't." She grinned. "I'm proud to say we coöpted the U.S.D.A."

By this spring, Cooper's outlook had improved markedly. Her staff was getting used to cooking fresh food again, the consultant was filling the database with recipes, and, in March, cafeteria attendance had finally begun to climb. At this pace, Cooper's losses would level off at around seventy thousand dollars—an acceptable amount, given all that she'd accomplished. And yet when she picked me up for dinner one evening in her Toyota Prius she looked haggard. She'd been to see her orthodontist for another radical tightening session, she told me. "It hurt so much I wanted to throw up." But her uneasiness had more to do with meat loaf.

Earlier that day, Cooper had gone to see Alice Waters, the chef and owner of Chez Panisse, whose foundation paid her salary. Waters was no fan of meat loaf. "I was really excited," Cooper said. "I told her that we were going to serve it with fresh vegetables and mashed potatoes. And she looked at me and said, 'Meat loaf! The kids can't possibly like meat loaf!'" Cooper took a long sip from her protein shake. "I almost got into it with her," she said. "I mean, what is a French country pâté? It's basically meat loaf, only it's steamed, right? But we can't possibly eat meat loaf."

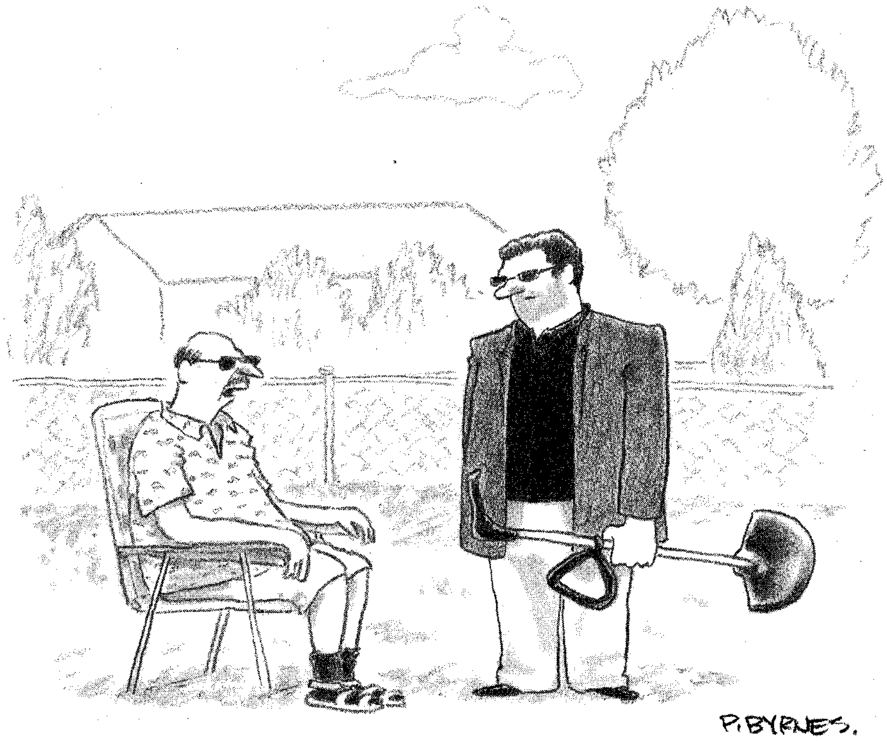
Cooper and Waters had seemed like a perfect match. They met in the mid-nineties, when Cooper was writing an oral history of female chefs and Waters was breaking ground for the Edible Schoolyard—a vegetable garden on the site of an asphalt playground in Berkeley. Waters's vision, which has given rise to school gardens across the country, was that students would spend an hour or two working the soil every week, then cook and eat what they grew—learning history, ecology, and healthful eating in the process. Cooper's cooking was supposed to be an extension of this philosophy. "The whole experience of lunch needs to be completely transformed," Waters told me. "It needs to be a place where you can experience the ritual of the table, a way to teach kids about stewardship of the land, about nourishing yourself and communicating with people, about this rich subject of ecogastronomy."

A year later, here they were, serving meat loaf. Cooper had been as idealistic as Waters once, but the longer she struggled to feed the masses the more she appreciated mass production: centralized kitchens, mainstream recipes, economies of scale. FullBloom, for example, had grown from a small bakery in the back of an espresso shop in San Francisco—the kind of soulful local enterprise that Waters adored—into a factory that made two hundred thousand pastries a day. That size allowed the bakery to spend months formulating pizzas for Cooper, knowing that they might recoup the investment later by baking for other local schools. "Alice doesn't want to work with anyone as large as FullBloom," Cooper said. "And I'm not sure I can work with anyone smaller. If I asked them to do the kind of R. and D. FullBloom did, they'd just say, 'Get the fuck out of here.' "

Waters admitted that Cooper had made great progress—"We're not sort of in the nacho place anymore"—but she felt that they still had a long way to go. Why couldn't they serve vegetable curry, she wondered, or sauté dishes to order? Cooper, meanwhile, had decades-old refrigerated trucks that kept breaking down. Her produce sometimes looked as if it came from a compost heap. Her labor costs were fifty-seven per cent of her budget (in most restaurants, it's less than forty), yet she couldn't cut union wages. "Alice is a really wonderful visionary," she said. "But this work is all about baby steps, and she can't see baby steps. In her perfect world, she'd like to have the kids served bountiful baskets of fresh-picked berries. And you know what? It ain't happening."

When I was in the seventh grade, my father took a two-year sabbatical in southern France and put us all in public schools. My lycée was a glum, disagreeable place. The hours were long, the students anarchic, the teachers authoritarian, but the cafeteria nearly made up for it. We sat at round tables in groups of eight and were served three courses of some of the strangest food I'd ever seen—sautéed squid, *boudin noir*, rabbit with mustard sauce. There were no choices to make, no variable subsidies to claim, no bagged lunches or vending machines. Everyone ate the same food, and the food, I discovered, was wonderful. Thinking back on those meals when I was in Berkeley, I could understand Waters's frustration. "What I'm imagining is happening all over the world," she told me. "It's not like we're inventing something that has never been done before."

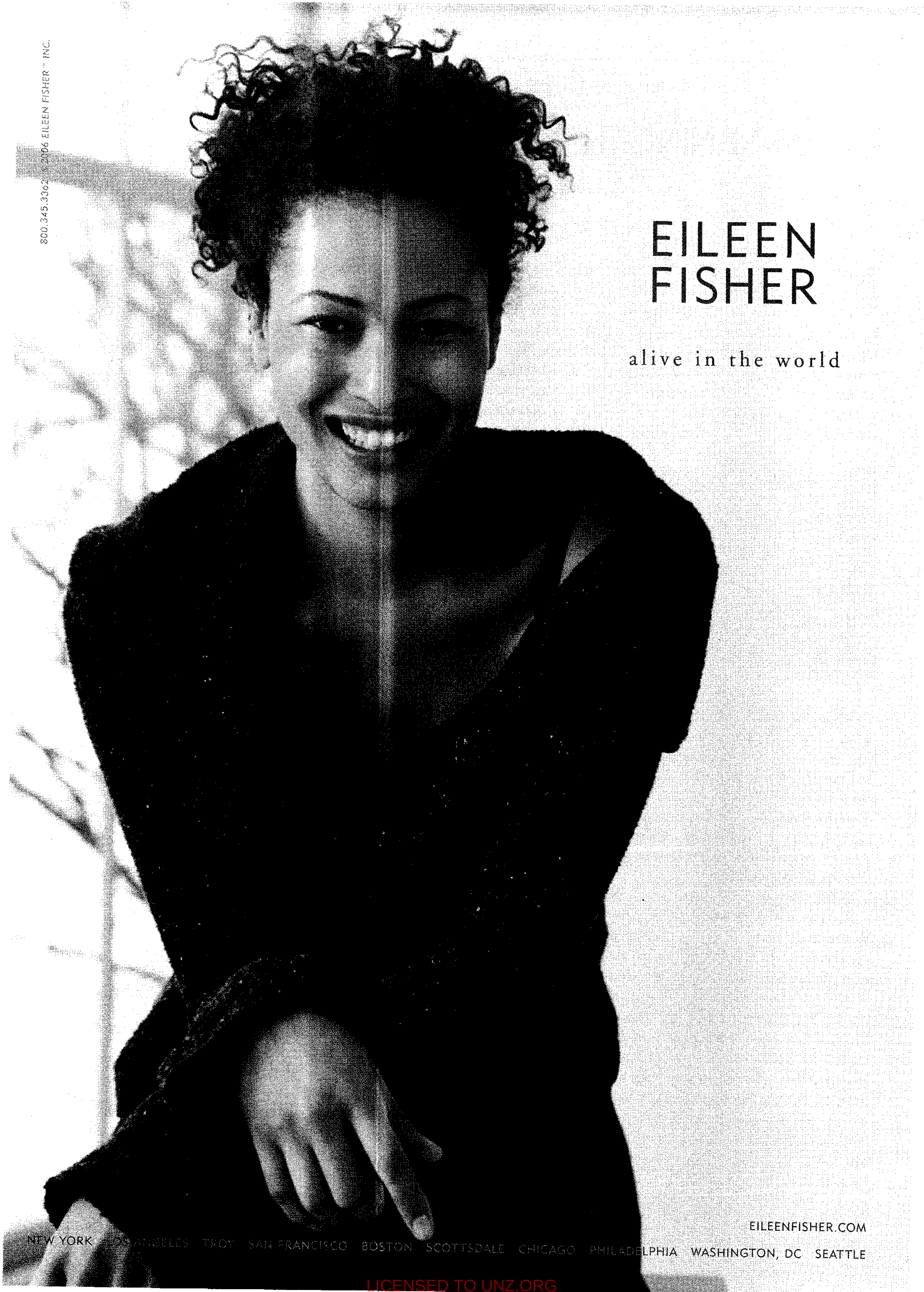
For Cooper, too, the French system seemed an ideal model, if only she could afford it. A month before my visit, she had toured some cafeterias in the town of Challans, in the west of France. The lunches there were made in a central kitchen then trucked in bulk to the satellite schools, to be served family style, just as I remembered. "At one meal, the first course was raw beets in a vinaigrette," Cooper recalled. "The second was braised salmon with lentils and leeks, and the third was a cheese course. That was school lunch." The cost of food and labor came to about eight dollars a meal—more than three times as much as the average American lunch—of which every child paid about two dollars. (In Rome, which recently adopted a similar system on a much larger scale, the meals cost only about five dollars, and seventy per cent of the ingredients are organic.)



"The weeds—I want 'em whacked."

I asked Cooper, one morning, as we were driving to the Central Kitchen, how long it would take American schools to switch to the French or Italian system, if they had the money. "Two years," she said. "There are three big issues: investing in kitchens, food procurement, and staff training. But I've made all these changes in six months without any money. You can't tell me it's going to take anyone else more than two years." This sounded optimistic at best. The school-lunch program won't be reauthorized until 2009, and it already costs the country seven billion dollars a year. To double the subsidies "would take a profile in courage," one anti-hunger lobbyist told me. Then again, the program has always been a creature of implausible politics. "Come on!" Cooper said. "The war costs more than a billion dollars a week! Why don't we say we'll double what we spend on school lunch? Where are our priorities? Maybe I was high the day they explained that in school."

It was well before dawn, and Cooper had to focus on the long, looping coastal road from Moss Beach. I could tell, though, that she was still running the numbers in her head. Politics, more than cooking, consumed her these days. "If I was getting up every morning at three-thirty just to make tuna-fish sandwiches, I'd jump off the Bay Bridge," she said. She owns two houses on the East Coast, one of them with a former partner, but she said that she had no intention of moving back anytime soon. She had agreed to work in Berkeley for three years and was already looking further ahead—to reforming the cafeterias of Portland, Oregon, perhaps, or to some other, more subversive scheme. "I want to sue the U.S.D.A.!" I'd heard her say, her eyes gleaming. "I want Oprah to pick this up! I want school lunch to be an election issue in 2008!" But first she had a few thousand mouths to feed. ♦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A CRITIC AT LARGE

LEARNING THE SCORE

Why Brahms belongs in the classroom.

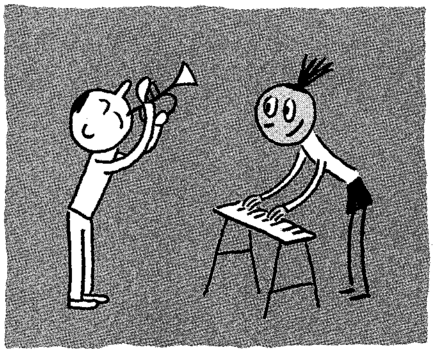
BY ALEX ROSS

Not long ago, I went out to Malcolm X Shabazz High School, in Newark, New Jersey, to meet Hassan Ralph Williams, the director of the marching band. Upon arriving, I found the corridors empty; the guard at the door pointed me toward the band room, and added that the students were "at the memorial." The memorial, I learned, was for Dawud Roberts, a sixteen-year-old Shabazz football player, who, a few days before, had suffered a fatal stab wound on Johnson Avenue, a few hundred feet from the school. Some students enjoy Williams's class, which meets for three hours every afternoon, because they love playing music; others see it more pragmatically, as a way to get through the day unscathed.

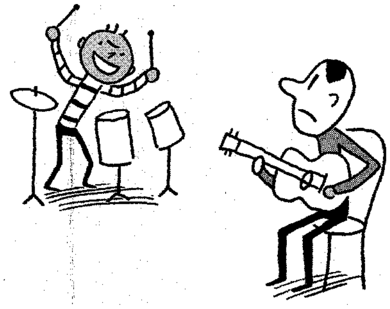
A tall, suave, mellow-voiced man with a mustache and a gleaming shaved pate, Williams is a native of Ozark, Alabama. He served in the Army for twenty-one years, leading marching bands in the 82nd Airborne Division and in the 25th Infantry. He then played jazz in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere with musicians such as Walter Bishop, Jr., and Woody Shaw. He got into teaching almost by accident, looking for work that would keep him busy between gigs. According to Donald Gatling, a longtime teacher at Shabazz, the school had a lacklustre band when Williams arrived, seventeen years ago. Now the Malcolm X Shabazz Marching Band is considered one of the best in the state, in demand for its pealing brass, explosive drum line, and manic energy.

The band room is decorated with the faces of jazz masters. Duke Ellington holds the place of honor, above the center of the blackboard. There are also placards stating the virtues of discipline, decorum, respect, and attention. One of them says, "The future belongs to those who prepare for it." A corner of the blackboard is posted with some recent student essays on the topic of Mozart's Requiem. "Mozart died while trying to complete this piece about Death," one student wrote. "How ironic." In front of the blackboard are five computers, each equipped with the Sibelius composing program and various tools for teaching notation. Williams encourages the students to learn musical notation at the computer, and to write their own music.

When I walked in, the Shabazz band was rehearsing "The Stars and Stripes Forever." The kids were making a happy noise, but details were getting lost in the rumble. "Listen downward," Williams kept saying, trying to get the upper lines in sync with the lower ones. He wanted them to bring out dance rhythms, such as the habanera, and the songful, Italianate shape of the melodies. "A long time ago, before electricity and TV and radio, people used to dance to this," he said. Two clarinettists responded by jumping out of their seats and dancing around, half gleefully and half sardonically.



Members of the Shabazz band, who range in age from eight to eighteen, work hard. They not only practice from 4 P.M. to 7 P.M. each school day but also play most weekends, either at football games or at public events. In the summer, they go on the road to band camp. Williams does more than beat time; he teaches music history, social history, and black history. (Ninety-five per cent of Shabazz students are African-American.) Sometimes he interrupts his usual attitude of jazz cool with an infusion of military discipline. "This ain't gonna *roll*," he might roar when there is too much noise in the room. "This isn't *happening*. You may look around and see a *chair* coming at your head!" But the drill-sergeant routines last only a few minutes, and the kids aren't afraid to talk back. If Williams asks, "Who's got the melody?," a girl might answer, "You do!" If he drops the name Wynton Marsalis, a few might shout out, "Who dat?" (They know.)



Later in the rehearsal, the piccolo players were struggling with the twirling solos that accompany Sousa's most famous tune, the one to which the words "Three cheers for the red-white-and blue" are sung, or, as Williams prefers to render it, "Be kind to our four-legged friends." Jihad Moore, a tall junior with a crooked smile who wore a blue-and-white basketball jersey with the number 24, was amusing himself by making an imaginary pistol out of his piccolo, holding one end of it with his thumb and gesturing toward the floor, gangsta-style. Williams was trying to get him to concentrate. He'd been telling Jihad that if he got to a certain level with the flute, or mastered a more unusual instrument like the oboe, he might be able to get into college on a scholarship. He sat Jihad next to another player, Kahliah Jordan, and had both students type their parts into the

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

computers, using the Sibelius software. He figured that it would help them grasp the parts and memorize them.

"Put a trill on that first A-flat," he said, leaning over their shoulders.

Jihad frowned at his part and asked, "Do we have to write *grandioso*?"

"No, skip the *grandioso*."

Williams offered a new incentive. "I'll take y'all to the International Buffet if you get this solo. Just the piccolos, at the International Buffet. But only if you *all* get it. If you all get this, we can wipe out any band on the planet."

"I'll wipe out any piccolo players," Jihad answered enthusiastically.

The standout player in the band was a senior named Vernon Jones. A slender young man with bright eyes and wide cheekbones, Vernon was getting a brilliant singing sound out of his trumpet—which Williams had bought for him—and, whenever the others took breaks, he kept working away at tricky leaps and rapid runs. He was also a composer, and wrote music and made band arrangements on the computers. Like many bands, Shabazz spices up its repertory with Top Forty songs, and Williams often relied on Vernon to find suitable songs and make idiomatic arrangements. Vernon needed only thirty minutes to knock out an arrangement of "I Believe I Can Fly"—a pungent, slightly weird orchestration, amped up by drums and brass, dense with jazzy harmonies. Vernon had been in Williams's band since he was seven; he had recently got into Rutgers, and his acceptance letter was pinned up on the blackboard.

Toward the end of the rehearsal, Williams stepped back and listened with his arms folded. He asked another of the trumpet players, a round-faced, wide-eyed eight-year-old named Keyshawn Mayo, to take over. Earlier in the day, Keyshawn had been offended that he had been demoted to a secondary part. "I can play first trumpet," he said. "I'm the best person my age." Now his face lit up, and he ran to the front. His small voice filled the room as he snapped his fingers: "And a five! And a six! And a seven and an eight!"

When President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, in 2002, he probably did not intend it to have a debilitating effect on arts education in the United States. The law rewards schools that meet certain testing standards in core subjects—reading, math, the sciences—and punishes those that fall short. Seventy-one per cent of school districts have narrowed their elementary-school curricula in order to make up the difference, and the arts have repeatedly been deemed expendable. In California, between 1999 and 2004, the number of students enrolled in music courses fell by nearly half, from 1.1 million to five hundred and eighty-nine thousand. Music education has been disappearing from schools for decades, but No Child Left Behind has transformed a slow decline into a precipitate fall.

In the past few years, advocates have issued studies, pamphlets, and talking points that marshal alarming statistics on the diminishment of music programs and argue passionately for their preservation. But there is something maddeningly vague at the heart of the literature. Why *must* music be taught? The answer seems obvious in the case of Vernon Jones: he's a natural musician, and, for him, the Shabazz band is the first step in what may turn out to be a major classical or jazz career. But, for most students, the usefulness of music class is much less clear. Anyone who has loved music from an early age feels certain that it has a unique and irreplaceable value, but it is difficult to translate that conviction into hard sociological data. Whenever advocates try to build a case for music on utilitarian grounds, they run up against fundamental uncertainties about the ultimate purpose of an art whose appeal is, as Plato anxiously observed, illogical and irrational.

The Mozart Effect has often been cited by proponents of music in schools. In 1993, two researchers claimed that a group of thirty-six undergraduates who had been subjected to ten minutes of Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos, K. 448, performed better than average on the abstract-and-spatial-reasoning section of the I.Q. test. Subsequent studies failed to reproduce this result. Nonetheless, the Mozart Effect inspired several books, a ream of newspaper articles, a line of Baby Mozart videos, and a shadowy-sounding organization called the Music Intelligence Neural Development Institute. People love the idea that they might be able to make their kids smarter by switching on

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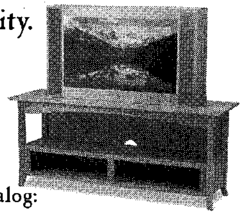

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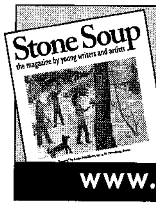

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Mozart once a day; it's seen as a shortcut to Parents' Weekend at Harvard. But kids aren't likely to fall in love with music that is administered to them like vitamins.

THE POET FOR J.K.

His genius is sired of misery or magic;
he dwells between disaster and the dream.
He might have been sedate; but only tragic
ecstasy is musical to him.
In every chaos he will wish a cure;
in life, a higher mystery of sorrow;
in death, the last existence that is pure.
Curiosity betrays him to tomorrow.
Necromantic passion, final terror
is his bequest: The wound was all he had
to multiply. Balancing the rope of error,
he shall fall to doom. He shall be mad,
sadly, deceived, he shall live, and he shall die
a master of all mummery.

—Allen Ginsberg

Other studies suggest that music students score higher on proficiency tests, or that their math grades go up with each year of study, or that they are less likely to get in trouble with the law. But none of this pro-music science has stemmed the cuts in music programs. To the contrary, music invariably presents itself as the most tempting target. In California, the decline in visual-arts courses is minimal compared with that of music classes, and enrollments in theatre and dance have gone up. According to the advocacy group Music for All, which in 2004 issued a dire report on the California crisis called "The Sound of Silence," music programs "represented single, relatively significant, politically expedient targets for cuts." So there is something about classical music, or about the prevailing culture of classical music, which is actively inviting elimination.

One problem is that music education lacks a powerful lobby. When politicians speak up for it, striking things happen. In Arkansas, Republican Governor Mike Huckabee has not only professed a love for music, as Bill Clinton often did, but has devised legislation to bolster it. Last year, Huckabee signed a law requiring every child in grades one through six to receive at least forty minutes a week of instruction in music and other arts. "In the true spirit of No Child Left Behind," Huckabee explained, "leaving the arts out is beyond neglect and is virtual abuse of a child."

Although Arnold Schwarzenegger, apparently inspired by Huckabee's unlikely right-wing arts crusade, recently announced a plan to rescue music education in California, the national outlook remains grim. Public funding for anything related to the arts has been contentious since the eighteen-eighties, when the progressive patron Jeannette Thurber failed to persuade Congress to fund a national conservatory. For practitioners of classical music, jazz, folk music, and other tradition-minded disciplines that lack mainstream commercial allure, the situation looks particularly bleak. How can they engage listeners who have heard almost nothing about the history and practice of the art in school? One alternative has increasingly become the norm: they can do the teaching themselves.

Not long ago, I met up in Brooklyn with a twenty-seven-year-old pianist named Soheil Nasseri, who regularly goes out to morning school assemblies around the city and tries to incite interest in classical music. Nasseri's trick is to start the session by talking about hip-hop. At Fort Hamilton School in Bay Ridge, he caught the attention of the crowd by mentioning that he was a friend of the impresario Damon Dash, whose name drew respectful nods. Nasseri then invited a student named Jovan Parish onstage, gave him a hip-hop handshake, and had him rap over some moody minor piano chords. (There was a line about "my vocabulary skills are ill.") It was up to the children to decide what this had to do with Beethoven's Sonata in F-Sharp. Afterward, students offered a string of questions about Beethoven and the piano: "What do you do when you make mistakes?" "What's the name of the piece that goes 'buh-buh-buh-BUH'?" "Why don't you compose yourself?" "When you play someone else's music, aren't you stealing?"

These days, virtually every orchestra, opera house, chamber-music series, and jazz organization has an education department. Musicians are sent into schools to teach the basics and, in theory, to encourage an enthusiasm that will survive the rigors of adolescence, in the course of which any kid with a liking for classical music discovers that it's considered stuffy, sissified, and terminally uncool. The effectiveness of "outreach" depends on the charisma of the person reaching out. Nasseri certainly has a knack for talking to kids. So, too, does David Robertson, the conductor of the St. Louis Symphony, whose quirky, guileless manner recalls the style of the late, great Fred Rogers. Michael Tilson Thomas, at the San Francisco Symphony, is a natural teacher, stirring memories of his longtime mentor, Leonard Bernstein. Bernstein's Young People's Concerts, with their combination of mandarin intelligence and pop-culture savvy (his 1964 lecture "What Is Sonata Form?" cited the Beatles' "And I Love Her"), still set the standard for entertaining pedagogy.

In jazz, the master teacher is Wynton Marsalis, the artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, who talks about music in a sophisticated yet unaffected way. Recently, I watched Marsalis take command of an unruly crowd of schoolkids at the Apollo Theatre, in Harlem. He launched into a lecture on connections between jazz and modern art, the thesis of which was that jazz was a form of modernism, and he backed it up with pictures, performances, and a never-ending stream of talk. He dropped the names Jackson Pollock and Piet Mondrian, gave a shout-out to Frank Gehry, and supplied a lovely definition of the word "cosmopolitan" ("It

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means you fit in wherever you go"). He administered discipline ("I'm old school—no talking"), explained the blues as a kind of emotional vaccination ("The blues gives you a little to keep it away"), and interrupted an explication of the African practice of call-and-response to acknowledge a sneeze ("Bless you—call-and-response!"). One of the teachers in the audience said to a colleague, "They ain't gettin' it. I couldn't appreciate this when I was their age." But, on the subway afterward, there was a positive buzz among the kids. One quoted a Marsalis aphorism to his friend: "You gotta have *heat* in everything you do."

Many orchestra administrators cling to the idea that a smattering of Young People's Concerts will indoctrinate children into the wonders of classical music. Sarah Johnson, who runs education programs at the Philadelphia Orchestra, is skeptical of that approach. "Many people say, 'Wow, we can bring twenty-six hundred students into the hall,' and feel like it's a great thing," Johnson told me. "This may have worked in the age of Bernstein, when classical musicians were celebrities on radio and early television. Today, those kids need to meet the musicians, find out how they got into music, what else they do when they're not playing. It has to be more up close and one-on-one. People have this picture of musicians as not quite human. We need to humanize them. We want to get to the point where we are cultural partners at certain schools, practically giving them a new music-faculty member."

The writer and consultant Joseph Horowitz has long urged orchestras to reinvent themselves as miniature conservatories and cultural centers. His formidable book "Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall" shows how American classical music became a "performance culture," an ersatz-European showplace for celebrity virtuosos, rather than a native-born genre. With orchestras such as the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the New Jersey Symphony, and, most recently, the Pacific Symphony, Horowitz has devised cross-disciplinary music festivals that can be translated into curricula for area schools. This fall, the Pacific will trace connections between Hungarian composition and Gypsy music, exposing the folk roots of classical style.

"The orchestra should be, first and foremost, an educational institution," Horowitz told me. "It should know how to explain to an audience what the art means and where it came from. Orchestras can feed the humanities programs at high schools. You can do Mozart and have the drama department put on 'Amadeus.' You can do Dvořák and get American-history classes and African-American studies involved. Dvořák is the greatest gift, because there is no better way to link American and European musical traditions."

Horowitz and the musicologist Robert Winter have created a set of teaching tools, including a book and a DVD, focussing on Dvořák's American residency. The great Czech composer, who grew up in abject poverty, heard African-American spirituals in 1892 and predicted, in a controversial newspaper interview, that African-Americans would shape the future of American music. Jeannette Thurber brought Dvořák to America, and invited African-Americans to study with him free of charge. One student was the composer Will Marion Cook, who later helped invent the African-American musical, became an early jazz bandleader, and served as a mentor to Duke Ellington. Because one woman in the Gilded Age decided that music should be taught differently, a new tributary opened in American culture. More people should learn this story in school.

On Westminster Street, in the West End section of Providence, Rhode Island, there are diners, corner markets, auto-repair stores, and, at No. 1392, the Providence String Quartet. People often do a double-take at the surreal sight of a chamber group playing Beethoven behind a storefront in a lower-income neighborhood. Although the quartet performs at colleges and museums, its main mission is to teach. It is the heart of a nonprofit organization, Community MusicWorks, which does more than bring music to young people; it is a revolutionary organization in which the distinction between performing and teaching disappears.

The core members of Community MusicWorks, which was founded in 1997, are Jesse Holstein and Jessie Montgomery, violinists; Sebastian Ruth, violist; and Sara Stalnaker, cellist. They were trained for conventional performance careers at Juilliard, Oberlin, and Brown, but they chose a different definition of success. Ruth, a thirty-one-year-old violist with an elegant face and a mellifluous voice, is their ringleader. He grew up in Ithaca, the son of two ex-hippie parents, who sent him to the Alternative Community School. Instead of going to a conservatory, he went to Brown and studied the philosophy of education. He read the work of Paulo Freire, the author of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," and Maxine Greene, the author of "Releasing the Imagination." Greene has argued that arts education can be not only a leisure pursuit or subculture for gifted children but an instigator of social change. Ruth decided to put these ideas into practice, by playing in a group that was part of the street life of a city.

"We want people to see the quartet where they wouldn't expect to," Ruth said. "We're here on the street, we're in the community center, we're in the soup kitchen, we're in the nursing home, or the 'assisted-living center,' I should say. We're over at the Rhode Island School of Design, or an indie-rock club, or City Hall. We kind of feel like there should be an office with a string quartet in City Hall. They've got a lot of offices there for things you might not think are strictly necessary."

Ruth dislikes the word "outreach," which makes it sound as if he and the other musicians were extending their hands to unlucky souls drowning at sea. "We are already living in the place that other people reach out to," he said, with a mildly pugnacious look. He also resists the idea that his program's primary purpose is to scout out and nourish exceptional talent. "We're not searching for genius, for 'diamonds in the rough,' " he said. "We're relating music-making to the community."

I sat in the back of the Westminster office to see how the idea of Community MusicWorks played out. The students, who are between seven and eighteen years old and come from Dominican, Haitian, Liberian, and Cambodian backgrounds, walked in one by one, their parents hovering at the door for a minute or two with broad smiles on their faces. The Providence players bantered with them for a while. Then Holstein shouted, "Let's do it!," and the children sat down to play. The Providence musicians corrected mistakes and suggested improvements in technique, but accuracy wasn't their primary concern. "You're worrying too much," Jessie Montgomery told Taè Ortiz, a violinist. "Even if you make mistakes, you'll find people don't care." Afterward, about five boys and ten girls sat down for a spaghetti dinner. There was an extended discussion of a young man who appeared on a motorcycle in a Britney Spears video; hip-hop selections played on the Community MusicWorks computer. Everyone stopped eating to sing along to Ciara's "1, 2 Step."

At one point, Carolina Jimenez, a young cellist, turned to me and happily announced, "I got into Classical!" I told her that I also got into classical when I was her age, but it turned out that she was talking about Providence Classical High School, a local public school. Ruth suggested that perhaps getting into one kind of "classical" helped Carolina get into the other Classical, and she rolled her eyes.

Ruth and his colleagues regularly go with the kids and their families to concerts by local orchestras, where they are faced with such questions as "Why are we the only black people in the audience?" Some of the older students meet up on Friday nights or on weekend retreats in a program called Phase 2, where they discuss deeper emotional and social issues. For this smaller group of students, the musicians of the Providence Quartet become, in effect, full-time counsellors, even part-time foster parents. There are now a hundred and thirty-two people on the waiting list for Community MusicWorks, and news of the program has spread around the country. A two-year fellowship program has been established for two young professional musicians, who will sit in with the group and learn its unusual methods, in order to apply them elsewhere.

One evening, the Providence players gave a concert at the West End Community Center, a mile or so from their studio. They use this space at least once or twice a week to teach larger groups. The concert took place on the center's basketball court: a piano was wheeled out, a rug was placed in the middle of the floor, and strings of Christmas lights provided a bit of atmosphere. About two hundred people showed up—parents, older and younger siblings, friends, and supporters of the quartet. Sitting in with them was the brilliant young pianist Jonathan Biss, who knew Heath Marlow, Community MusicWorks' director of development, from music camp.

This being a classical-music concert, there was a certain amount of concern about decorum. "Sit like a lady," one parent said to her preteen daughter. "Ladies don't sit like that." Before the first piece, Ruth got up to encourage the crowd to stay silent during the performance, but he avoided taking a hallway-monitor tone. "Sometimes we get excited by this kind of music, but mostly we stay quiet," he said. "If it makes you want to get up and dance, well, just think about getting up and dancing." There was some giggling, a shout of "Cut it out!," and much changing of seats, but I have witnessed considerably noisier and more disrespectful audiences

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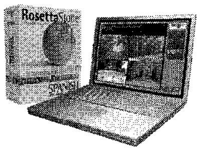

on Sunday afternoons at Carnegie Hall. There was no dancing.

The Providence opened the concert with the first movement of Beethoven's "Serioso" Quartet. Taè Ortiz, now less nervous, played Boccherini's Minuet, lavishly accompanied by Biss. Jovanne Jean-François and Carolina Jimenez played the Adagio from Vivaldi's Concerto in G Minor for two cellos. Vanessa Centeno and Ruth Desrosiers, violinists, performed "The Two Grenadiers," by Schumann. The main event was Brahms's Piano Quintet in F Minor, a craggy monument of the chamber repertory, which Biss and the Providence delivered at a level that would have satisfied any chamber-music audience. A couple of lanky teen-age boys tapped their feet to the driving rhythms of the Scherzo. "That was bangin'," one of them said afterward. "I wanna play on the piano someday," an eight-year-old behind me told his mother.

After the concert, as people stood around and talked and the younger children resumed running around the room, Ruth Desrosiers's brother David—a stout young man in a Shady University T-shirt—gravitated toward the piano on which Biss had just hammered out the coda of the Brahms. David is one of Sebastian Ruth's viola students, but he has also taught himself some piano. He approached the instrument somewhat stealthily, but Biss noticed him, and watched with curiosity as the boy launched into a bluesy melody apparently of his own invention, with a strong bass line and a snaking melody. It turned out to be a West End variation on Beethoven's "Für Elise."

The philosopher John Dewey, in his 1934 book, "Art as Experience," lamented the American habit of putting art on a "remote pedestal." He wrote, "When an art product once attains classic status, it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience." Dewey's book was widely read, but the argument never really sank in. To this day, the arts in America, when pressed, define themselves in opposition to society. Perhaps the deepest problem with contemporary music education is that so many of its practitioners have been raised in the monastic culture of the music conservatory, where mastery of technique is the dominant topic and where discussion of music's social or political or spiritual meaning is often discouraged. The Canadian scholar Paul Woodford, in a book-length essay on the relationship between Dewey's ideas and music education, writes, "In my own experience, few music education majors entering their senior year can distinguish Marxism from capitalism, capitalism from democracy, the political Left from Right, or the modern from the postmodern." They are, in cultural terms, idiot savants.

"Releasing the Imagination," the Maxine Greene book that so impressed Ruth, proposes that arts need to be incorporated into democratic culture not for its own sake but for the sake of democracy. She believes that children can gain deeper understanding of the surrounding world by looking at it from the peculiar vantage point of a work of art. She writes, "To tap into imagination is to become able to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real." Children learn to notice surprising details that undermine a popular stereotype; they grow tolerant of difference, attuned to idiosyncrasy. They also can experience a shock of perception that shows them alternative possibilities within their own lives, whether or not those possibilities or those lives have an obvious surface relationship with the art work in question. Thus, Greene argues, even the oldest art forms can become vehicles of democratic thinking. Because they have transcended time, they can become part of any time.

But why Brahms? Isn't it simply a self-indulgent fantasy to think that German chamber music could change the world of a girl whose mother is living on food stamps?

Ruth paused, his rueful smile indicating that he had answered this question many times.

"I don't know how it works," he said. "I guess, in the beginning, it is something *I* want to do for myself. Because there's something so bleak about a performing career these days. I don't mean just in terms of the prospects of getting a job. I also mean what you feel once you get the job. You are in this tight, closed-off world. You are playing generally at very expensive concerts for people who can afford it, and who are already steeped in it. You fight the feeling that it's not real. We get wonderful collaborators like Jonathan Biss because other people are fighting that feeling, too. They want to tap into a much more visceral sense of emotional connection.

"Here I'm feeding off all this energy around me, this rebellious energy, and I'm playing for people who usually don't know this music at all. We're out here making it up as we go along, because we're not teachers in the conventional sense and not performers in the conventional sense. Hopefully, we're not just scattering experiences here and there, hopefully we're creating continuity from one to the other. But I really don't know what effect we're having. Certainly, we're happy. It's as if we'd never left college. We're posting signs, organizing things at the last minute, putting on performances in any space available.

"But what does it do? I don't know if it changes anything right in a single moment in anyone's life. But it might change how someone thinks. Maxine Greene talks about the arts creating openings, this mysterious clearing in people's lives, so they walk out of the forest and can breathe. Maybe, at that moment, music becomes a huge part of their lives. Or maybe they use the clearing to see themselves in a new light, and go on to do something different. It could be any kind of music, could be any other art form."

Ruth looked out at Westminster Street, which was empty of people.

"Of course, it's all full of contradictions," he went on. "Let me tell you a story about Vanessa Centeno, who's been with us for many years. Her mom works various jobs, day and night. She doesn't want her daughter to have the same existence. There was an article about us in the paper, in which she was quoted as saying that she loves our program because classical music is 'for people who have class.' It was funny that she said that, when my whole thing has been about trying to undo these stereotypes, deconstruct the idea that this music has 'class,' and make the point that music can be made anywhere by anyone at any time.

"Vanessa's mom and I had such different ideas in mind. I was trying to get out of the world that she was trying to get into. But, in the end, we're going in the same direction." He stretched out his arm toward the door and the street. "We are both moving toward Violin." ♦

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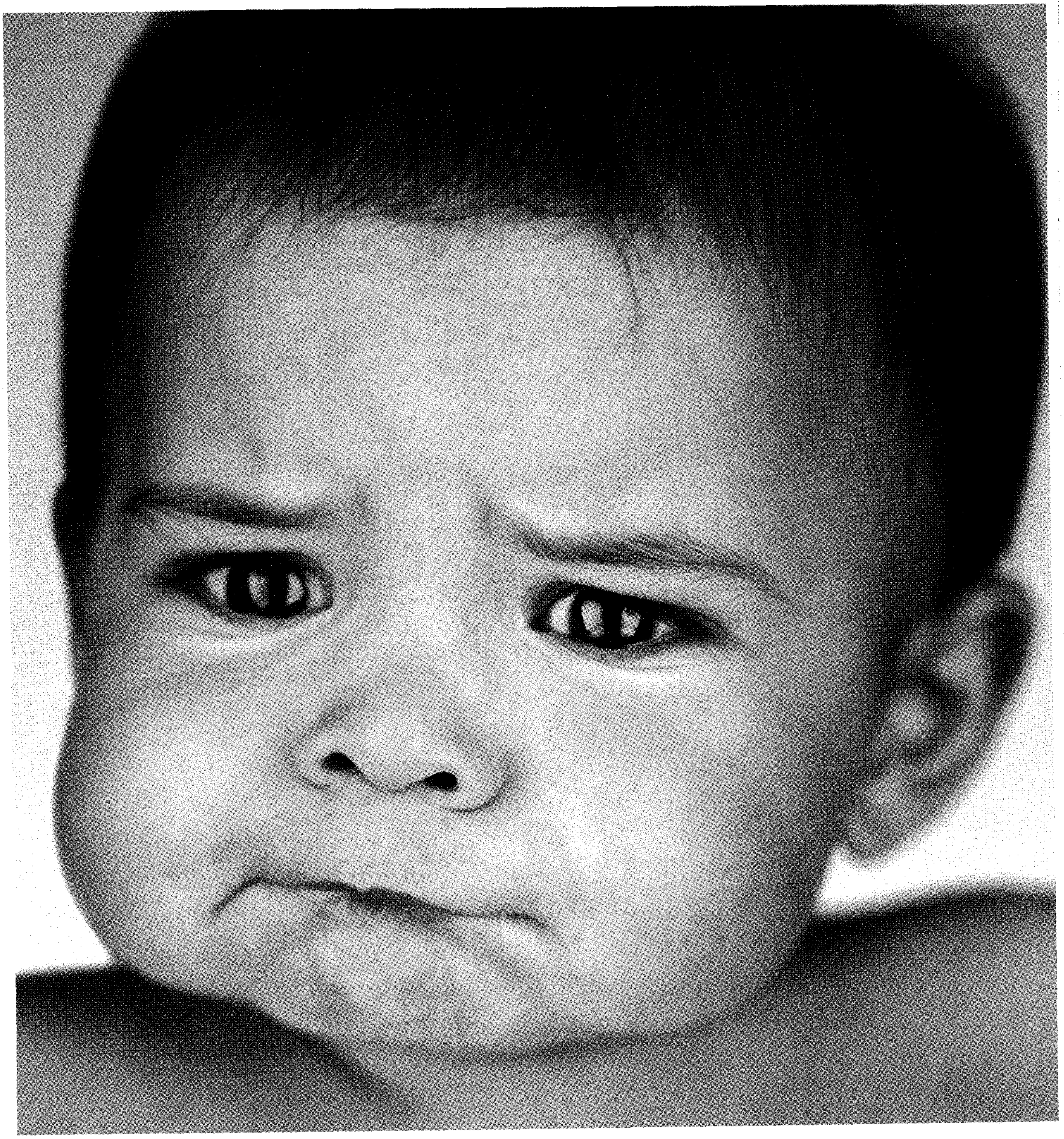
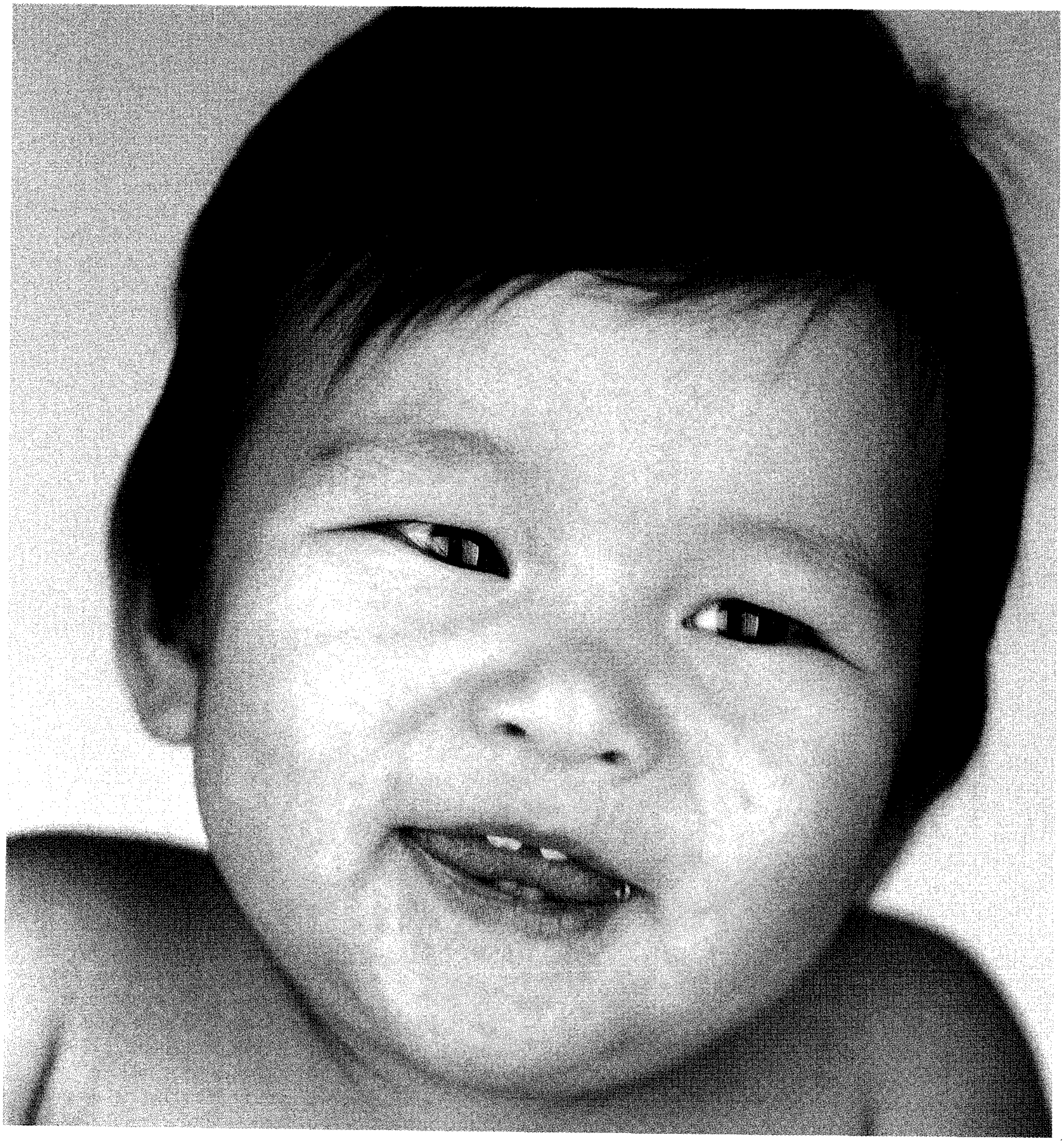


A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE BABY LAB

How Elizabeth Spelke peers into the infant mind.

BY MARGARET TALBOT



On weekday mornings at nine o'clock, at Harvard University's Laboratory for Developmental Studies, the babies start arriving in a long procession, looking like young pashas in their luxurious, oversized strollers. Researchers rush out to greet them, brandishing toys and consent forms. One day this summer, eight-month-old William was carried into a small, darkened room, where he sat on his father's lap and viewed, on a screen in front of him, rectangles and dots shrinking in size or number. He was alerted to a new picture by a silly *boing* noise (and a brief appearance by Clifford the Big Red Dog). William, who is blond and wide-eyed, contemplated this spectacle with the grave dignity of the preverbal. By noon, most of the lab's half-dozen study rooms were occupied. Babies listened to French and English speakers coo over toys and watched piles of sand grow and diminish; toddlers hunted after hidden Cheerios and gauged the nature of gravity and solidity.

The lab, which sprawls over three buildings on the Harvard campus, is a pleasant place, with wide windows offering an expansive view of Cambridge. The waiting area has a wooden train set, and a Gary Larsonesque cartoon that some-

Spelke is firmly convinced that boys and girls are born with essentially the same cognitive tools. Photographs by Martin Schoeller.

"This wouldn't be so bad if they'd pipe in some jazz."

one taped up is captioned "At the National Sippy Cup Research Center." A bulletin board in the office lists ongoing studies in a surrealistic shorthand: "Talking Blobs," "Blocks and Holes," "Wet Animals." The lab is a domain of peculiar little scenarios, all energetically and painstakingly staged for the very young in an effort to probe the black box—the mysterious machine—that is their minds. It is also the domain of Elizabeth Spelke, a fifty-seven-year-old cognitive psychologist, who supervises the work of ten graduate students, twenty undergraduate research assistants, and assorted visiting scholars and postdocs, most of whom are testing various aspects of her signature idea—namely, that babies come into the world mentally equipped with certain basic systems for ordering it. Her grad students call the lab Spelkeland.

A few weeks earlier, Spelke had watched a videotape of a researcher who was running a pilot study with a talkative, curly-haired two-year-old girl. The study, which used finger puppets, was aimed at determining what kinds of mathematical concepts a toddler might understand intuitively. Could she track the number of bunny puppets that were missing when the researcher removed them from her fingers, stowed them in a box, then lifted them out, leaving one or two inside? This little girl seemed to be doing just that—she wasn't satisfied with the number of bunnies that the researcher, Véronique Izard, had removed from the box, and she was craning her neck in search of more puppets. Like all studies in Spelke's lab, this one would be evaluated at both a high level and a humble one. "Yes!" Spelke said, punching the air. "Wow! She definitely expected another one." Izard struggled to push a recalcitrant bunny puppet onto her finger, and Spelke frowned. "We definitely need to get puppets that go on faster," she said.

Later, I talked with Spelke in her sunny corner office, which featured stray touches of whimsy—an inflatable palm tree, a windup toy brain on a crowded bookshelf. When she leans forward to make a point, her shoulders hunch; she is tall and gangly, with straight, shoulder-length hair parted in the middle, large oval glasses, and a way of speaking about her work that is at once eager and precise. "I'm fascinated by babies and little kids," she said. "But the questions that really keep me up at night are: What distinguishes us from other animals? How do we make sense of what goes on around us? What are the core notions that all of our systematic knowledge is based on?"

Over the past three decades, Spelke has created a series of ingenious studies that have given us a picture of the baby mind which is far different from the long-standing view of it as, in William James's famous formulation, a "blooming, buzzing confusion." As Spelke likes to say, there are some forms of knowledge that humans get "for free." Even at two and a half months, she argues, infants apprehend certain laws of the physical world—for example, that objects are cohesive and distinct and cannot pass through solid surfaces, and that they move along expected trajectories unless something obstructs them. Contrary to the Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget—who believed that babies were born with sensory capacities but with no real knowledge, and who theorized, in 1954, that infants lacked a sense of "object permanence"—Spelke says that even newborns understand that things still exist when they can no longer see them. Babies, in her view, have a sense of other people as "goal-directed agents" who are capable of forming intentions and acting on them. And humans are endowed with a natural sense of geometry, an ability to orient themselves in space.

In 1981, Spelke, along with her colleagues Barbara Landau and Henry Gleitman, published the results of a study in which they introduced blind, or blindfolded, toddlers into a room with objects in four locations. They had the children walk between them on a specific path, then asked them to use another path to move one object to another—putting a toy onto a chair, for example. The kids proved strikingly adept at the task. Spelke's experiment linked her to Socrates, who quizzed an uneducated Athenian slave on principles of shape, angle, and line, found him remarkably apt, and concluded that geometry was a gift of the human soul. (Descartes, too, believed that humans had an innate sense of geometry; he described an exercise in which a blind man holding two sticks in front of him could infer the point at which the sticks crossed.)

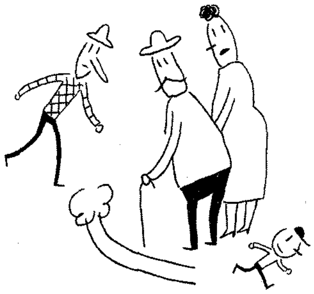
Spelke's work even suggests that babies have an ability to compare large approximate sets. In 2000, a study that she did with the psychologist Fei Xu showed that six-month-old infants can reliably distinguish between displays of eight and sixteen dots; a 2005 study revealed that they could tell the difference between sixteen and thirty-two. (The subjects ran into trouble with smaller ratios.) Babies can also do a kind of addition and subtraction, tracking small numbers of objects and reasoning about what happens when one is added or taken away.

In Spelke's view, these innate capacities are the foundations for all kinds of other learning. She told me, "When you are a baby, even before you acquire language, you need a stock of concepts, so that, for instance, when someone says, 'Look at the dog,' you can divide up the world in such a way that you know what to look at." Human babies share most of these core capacities with other animals, suggesting that they are part of our evolutionary heritage. Even desert ants, which leave home to look for carcasses to feed on and make their way back by a different but direct path, possess what Spelke would call "natural geometry." And many animals, from pigeons to monkeys, can distinguish between quantities. What is uniquely human is the capacity to combine such core abilities—through the medium of language, Spelke surmises—into more sophisticated capabilities; a baby's intuitive sense of quantities eventually flowers into an ability to perform mental arithmetic.

Spelke's ideas have been enormously influential among academics. "Nowadays every psychology student is taught that James and Piaget were wrong," the cognitive scientist and evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker wrote in *Time* five years ago. "From their earliest months, in fact, children interpret the world as a real and predictable place. . . . This new understanding is largely the legacy of Harvard psychologist Elizabeth Spelke." Karen Wynn, an infant-cognition researcher at Yale, told me, "Spelke has done more to shape our understanding of how the human mind initially grasps the world than anyone else." In 2000, when the Association for Psychological Science gave her its William James Fellow Award, the citation noted that Spelke had "developed techniques of studying infants' beliefs that are far more probative than might have been imagined only a short time ago," and that her work had begun "to answer perennial philosophical questions about the origins of human knowledge about space, objects, motion, unity, persistence, identity, and number."

That infants could be said to have "beliefs" at all is a surprising notion, and one that would give many parents pause. It gives some cognitive psychologists pause, too. Spelke's findings about how infants perceive objects—as solid, continuous, and perduring even when you don't see them—have been widely replicated, and are now firmly established in the infant-studies curricula. But her more ambitious theories of "core knowledge" have their critics. Empiricists argue that scientists such as Spelke underestimate how much babies learn through experience; evolutionary psychologists such as Pinker think that we are genetically encoded with many more core competencies than the four or five that Spelke allows for, including things like an ability to tell edible from poisonous food and to sense danger. Other scholars think that Spelke has contributed to a distorted view of babies as preternaturally smart. Marshall Haith, a developmental psychologist at the University of Denver, believes that she and her colleagues "seriously overplay what is going on in infants' heads." As he sees it, Spelke's "rich interpretation of infants' capabilities encourages parents and caretakers to feel as though they have to pour as much into the 'sophisticated' infant mind as possible." In this view, Spelke's research has helped fuel the modern parent's obsession with Baby Einstein videos and bilingual nannies.

Yet Spelke's arguments could be seen as doing the opposite. After all, in her opinion, infants come equipped with crucial knowledge that they will never need to be taught. As she wrote to me in an e-mail, "Infants are world-class learners and can be trusted to select, more or less on their own, experiences that will enhance their learning. From the earliest age, they attend to novel objects and events. They are also highly predisposed to learn by observing and interacting with other people." She went on, "There seems to be a common assumption, in thinking about children's development, that earlier is better. So, the reasoning goes, if it's good for a four-year-old to understand counting, it would be even better if a two-year-old could be induced to understand counting. There's no evidence to support this assumption and some reason to be skeptical of it. Two-year-olds are already engaged in the task of mastering much of the encyclopedic knowledge about objects, events, places, and people that we adults take for granted. Diverting them from this task by introducing other tasks, like learning to read or work with numbers, seems useless at best and possibly harmful."



One of the most contentious elements of Spelke's thinking is her firm conviction that boys and girls are born with essentially the same cognitive tools. (Although she has not done experiments expressly designed to assess gender differences, she has never found sex to be a relevant factor in any of her cognition studies.) In 2005, the former Harvard president Lawrence Summers said, during a speech, that women's underrepresentation in fields such as engineering was "not easy to attribute to socialization," and speculated that it was the result of innate gender differences. At Harvard, Summers's remarks set off all manner of soul-searching and recrimination: meeting after meeting at which Summers apologized, sort of apologized, or failed to apologize to female professors and other offended parties; a lack-of-confidence vote by the faculty of arts and sciences; dozens of op-eds condemning him for bumptiousness and sexism. When he ultimately announced his resignation, last February, it was in large part because important people at the university had never forgiven him.

Spelke had been one of Summers's fiercest critics, calling his remarks "wrong, point for point." And she lambasted him for ignoring a more obvious explanation for the disparity in achievement: "the impediments to women's progress posed by long-standing patterns of prejudice, unwelcoming environments and unequal resources." Spelke soon found herself at odds with old allies like Steven Pinker, whom she debated at Harvard at the height of the tumult, in April, 2005, on "the science of gender and science." Recent studies, Pinker said, suggested that men and women had intrinsic differences in aptitude; Spelke acknowledged the existence of small variances but said that there was no aggregate gap in ability.

The field of evolutionary psychology is prone to a cheerful—sometimes gleeful—fatalism about sex differences. (Older men ditching their aging wives for nubile mistresses? Men are genetically programmed to spread their DNA! Women more inclined toward gardening than particle physics? Blame it on our hunter-gatherer ancestors!) Although Spelke is a staunch Darwinian who believes, like Pinker, that natural selection shaped the modern human brain, her research on infants and toddlers has led her to conclude that gender is simply not a significant dividing line when it comes to doing math or science. Other scientists, including Pinker, believe that some sex differences in cognition emerge later, perhaps with the hormonal changes of puberty. But Spelke tends to believe that these effects are minimal, and, in any case, are trumped by the fundamental commonalities manifest in infants and young children.

"We have a tendency, when we think intuitively about ourselves and other people, to greatly overemphasize differences," Spelke said as we sat on her back-yard deck in Cambridge, a vantage point from which you notice that she lives an enviable five-minute walk from her laboratory. "We think that differences we can see on the surface signal some deeper, underlying difference, and I think this is almost always an illusion. To me, the important and interesting implication of the sex-difference stuff is not that there should be more or fewer women in science; it's how much we are alike. And, sure, biologically we play different roles, and we can imagine that Darwinian evolution might create cognitive differences, and even two different psychologies for men and women. But, as a matter of fact, it hasn't turned out that way. We are *deeply* alike. And we see this when we study infants."

Babies and toddlers, for all their charm, are messy research subjects, in more ways than one. At the Harvard lab one morning this summer, six-month-old Alice sat on a bench in the waiting area, crumpling up—and drooling over—the consent forms that her father was trying to sign. Blue-eyed, six-month-old Jaleanna, who sat on her mother's lap, appeared mildly interested in the piles of colored sand that a lab intern kept pouring onto a small black stage, but she was riveted by her mother's hands. "Do you think you could possibly hold her a little differently, so she can't play with your thumb?" the lab intern asked delicately.

Designing an experiment for studying babies is complicated by the fact that they cannot speak, let alone fill out questionnaires, or do much of anything that requires motor skills. The developmental psychologist Paul Bloom, of Yale, in his book "Descartes' Baby," writes, "It is difficult to learn about the mental life of any creatures that cannot use language, but a baby poses special challenges. Mature nonhumans, although nonverbal, are physically adroit. Chimpanzees can easily express their preferences through coordinated action; pigeons peck; rats run through mazes, and so on. But young babies just lie there, crying and gurgling." They also easily get restless and out of sorts, which means that anyone who wants to study them has to work quickly.

The researchers at Spelke's lab must constantly adjust their protocols to account for unforeseen behavior. At a lab meeting that I attended, Véronique Izard's bunny-puppets study was under discussion; one researcher pointed out that you couldn't necessarily conclude much from a toddler's continuing to search inside a box, as children tend to be fascinated by the boxes themselves (just as babies often like the wrapping paper better than the gift). "Oh, yeah," a grad student added. "They *always* reach in. You're sticking a box in their face; there's nothing else to do except stick their hands in." Somebody wondered whether filling the box with Styrofoam peanuts, in order to make the puppet search more challenging, might be a good idea; somebody else countered that it would involve too much cleanup afterward. Two visiting scholars from Sweden lamented that toddlers had too much fun with the task that a new study was designed around: dropping blocks into shape-sorting boxes. It slowed things down, because the children, all about twenty-four months old, weren't very good at it. "They can sit and do this for an hour," Claes von Hofsten, one of the Swedish scholars, said. "They make enormous mistakes, but they do it again and again and again."

At the lab, children must be accompanied by their parents, and babies are held by them. Parents—especially the sort of parents who respond to letters from a Harvard lab (which gets their names from the Cambridge City Hall and other local governments)—aren't always able to resist coaching. Nathan Winkler-Rhoades, a graduate student in Spelke's lab, ran into that problem when he was testing two-year-olds to see whether they can ascertain the relationship between a room and a simple map of it (a difficult developmental leap). One mother, frustrated by her little girl's incomprehension of the task, jumped up in exasperation and said, "Look, honey: *This* is the room. *This* is the picture of the room."

Experiments can be derailed when babies get hungry, wet, or cranky. Particularly avid wailers have to be dropped from studies altogether. Spelke and her researchers call this population the "fuss-outs." One afternoon, I watched videotapes of a study that Winkler-Rhoades was doing, which was staged in a circular white room where Spelke and her students conduct experiments involving orientation in space. (I found the room creepy, not least because once you're inside you can't tell where the exit is. But a graduate student told me that when Spelke walked in for the first time she spun in circles, delighted with its possibilities.) On one tape, a small boy had stopped in the middle of the experiment in order to pick up a chair and pound it on the floor. "When they quit, they *really* quit," Winkler-Rhoades said. "I've lost about a third of my subjects to fuss-outs. You get kind of romantic about the work, how we're building theories, but, day to day, it feels nothing like the grandiosity it's going to be woven into." We watched for a few minutes as a little girl in braids who turned out to have an unusually good sense of direction scampered around the room. "Her nose was running the whole time," Winkler-Rhoades said, sounding very much like a nonparent.

For much of the history of experimental psychology, which has its origins in the nineteenth century, babies weren't considered worthy or practical subjects for research. In 1897, Wilhelm Wundt, a prominent German psychologist, wrote, "The results of experiments which have been tried on very young children must be regarded as purely chance results, wholly untrustworthy on account of the great number of sources of error. For this reason, it is an error to hold, as is sometimes held, that the mental life of adults can never be fully understood except through the analysis of the child's mind."

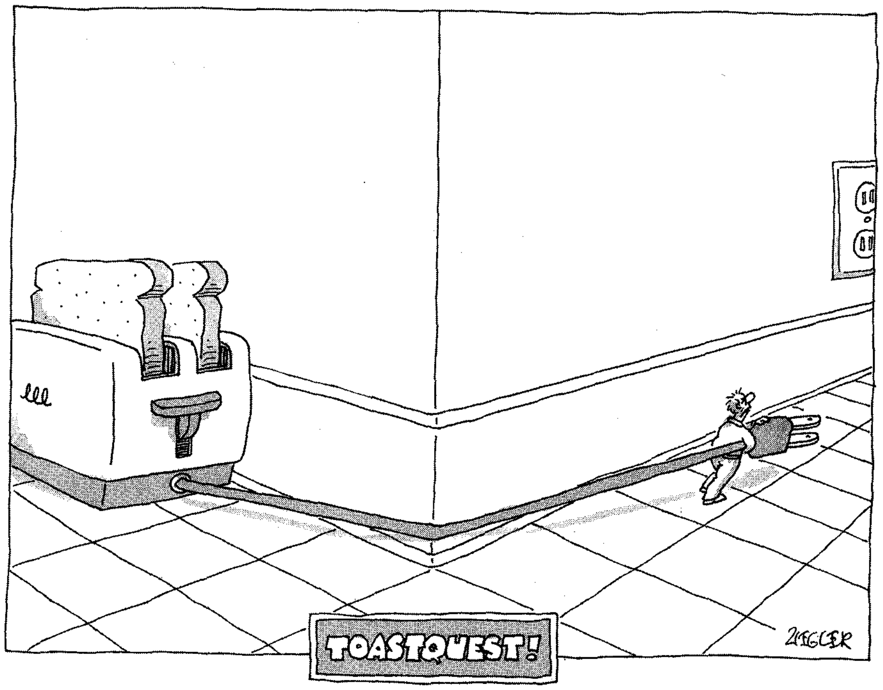
One Victorian scientist who was eager to study infants was Charles Darwin, who wrote one of the first "baby biographies"—diaristic examinations of a baby's every burp and grasp. In 1877, Darwin published his "Biographical Sketch of an Infant," basing it on notes that he had made during the babyhood of his oldest child, nicknamed Doddy. In Darwin's account, the doting father is as easy to detect as the dispassionate scientist. He wrote, "On the seventh day, I touched the naked sole of his foot with a bit of paper, and he jerked it away, curling at the same time his toes, like a much older child when tickled. . . . Once when he was 66 days old, I happened to sneeze, and he started violently, frowned, looked frightened, and cried rather badly. . . . For a long time afterwards sounds made him start and wink his eyes much more frequently than did sight." Darwin took note of early language, such as Doddy's appropriation of the word "mum," at fourteen months, to signify all foods. He observed that his son, when asking for food, gave the word "a most strongly marked interrogatory sound at the end." He added that the boy "also gave to 'Ah,' which he chiefly used at first when recognizing any person or his own image in a mirror, an exclamatory sound, such as we employ when surprised."

In the nineteen-twenties, Jean Piaget and his wife, Valentine, embarked on a project of fine-grained—at times minute-by-minute—observation of their three children; they also performed gentle experiments on them. The Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner, in his book "The Quest for Mind," writes, "Piaget's method and materials were deceptively simple. He sat near his child, who was lying in the crib, or playing on the floor, watched the infant's spontaneous behavior, and from time to time introduced various kinds of interruptions or 'problems,' carefully noting the child's reactions to these impositions. The experimental materials were restricted to the most banal objects: pens, berets, pocket watches, boxes." Piaget did not conduct controlled experiments or statistical analyses, but his delineation of the stages of a child's mental development—from egocentrism to the interiorization of thought to a symbolic understanding of the world—has exerted a resilient influence on education, as well as on cognitive psychology. As Steven Pinker told me, although much of Piaget's theoretical superstructure has "imploded" under experimental scrutiny, "for a guy who just played with his three kids, his observations have stood the test of time astonishingly well." Piaget's version of the baby biography was not only the crucible of cognitive psychology but also the most convincing argument to date that babies were interesting.

In recent years, technology has offered new ways of creating such records. Deb Roy, a cognitive scientist at M.I.T., and his wife, Rupal Patel, a professor of speech and hearing sciences at Northeastern, are one year into a project of videotaping the first two to three years of their son's life—an enterprise that involved the installation of microphones and fish-eye video cameras in every room of their house. Roy told me that he hopes the project will yield new insights into language acquisition. One of the first things they'll be analyzing is how their son learns early words like "car," "bath," or "bye." Roy explained, "Often a child will 'under-extend' these words—using them only in specific contexts, like saying 'car' only when he sees a car through the window. We'll track the history of a word, every time it's used, and see what cues it." He went on, "When you're a diarist, you have only so much time, and, typically, you're also the caregiver. You can take notes of only a very small subset of experience." Roy seemed undisturbed by the idea of domestic life in the company of an all-seeing camera, though he noted that his home was equipped with "Oops!" buttons that allowed him to erase moments better left to the imagination than to scientific posterity.

Observing a baby's external behavior is, to say the least, an oblique way of assessing its mind. In the mid-twentieth century, scientists began looking for a more direct window into the infant soul. Though babies can't control their hands or limbs very well, they do have control over their eyes. Show them two images, and they often exercise that control by looking longer at one than at the other. It's probably too much to say that they "like" looking at one more than the other—who knows what a baby's affective connection is to a picture of a checkerboard or a purple cow?—so psychologists adopted the more neutral word "prefer." By looking longer, the theory goes, babies show a preference for one image over another, and, by the same token, an ability to distinguish between them.

In the late nineteen-fifties, Robert Fantz, a psychologist at Western Reserve University, noticed that newly hatched birds preferentially peck on a spot where food is sprinkled. He kept reducing the size of the food pellets until birds couldn't



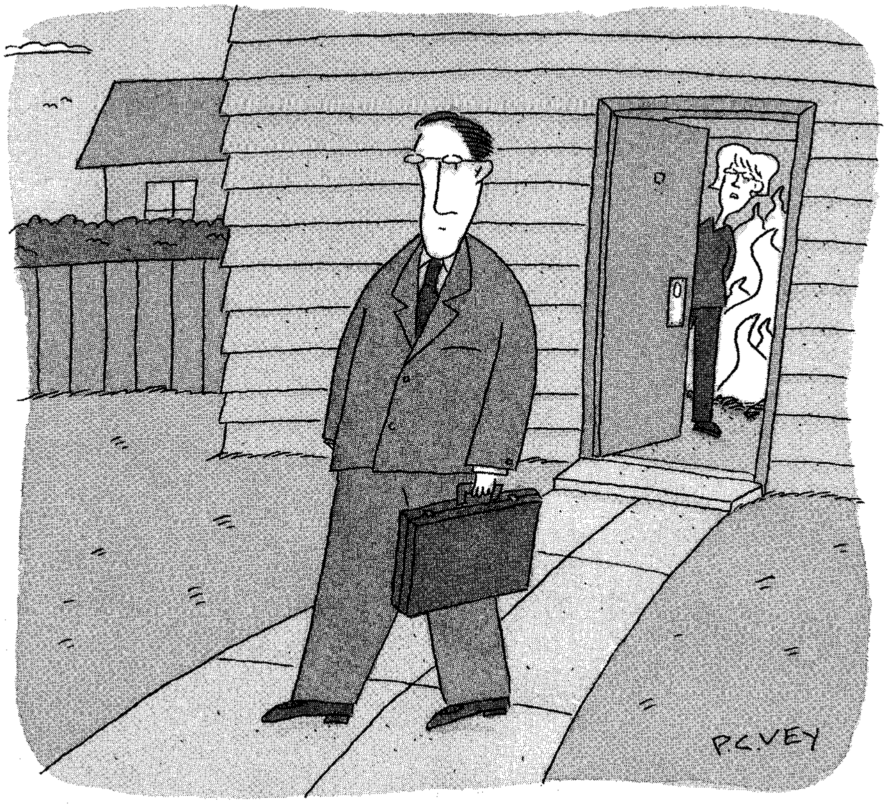
perceive them well enough to peck at the spot. He then tried something similar with human babies: he put two images side by side—one a black-and-white set of stripes, the other a gray block—and found that infants looked longer at the stripes. Fantz made the stripes narrower and narrower until they blended into a gray haze and babies could no longer register a difference.

Fantz's method, known as a "preferential looking" study, was embraced by baby researchers, who soon discovered things about infants that no one had been able to document before: they could distinguish colors (and preferred red); they recognized their mother's face and voice, even as newborns; they preferred looking at human faces to looking at anything else; they could reliably distinguish among facial expressions. As Spelke told me, preferential looking "gave us a set of tools that let us play Twenty Questions with a baby. 'Yes or no—does this look like this or like that?' Progress was slow, but over the course of a decade or two you could learn a lot." Of course, it wasn't absolutely clear what some of this gazing meant. If a baby didn't evince a looking-time preference between, say, sky blue and teal blue, did that mean he couldn't tell the difference between them—or that he could, but judged them equally appealing?

In the seventies, other baby researchers—chiefly, the psychologist Frances Horowitz—observed that if you keep showing babies the same visual stimulus they eventually look at it less and less. When something that they perceive as new comes into their line of vision, they perk up and look at it longer. Spelke and Xu exploited this tendency in their dots experiment, which is easily replicated. Show an infant a picture of sixteen dots over and over again, and measure how long he looks at it each time. After a while, he gets used to it—or "habituated," as psychologists say—and the time he spends looking at it decreases. Then show him eight dots; he will likely look at it longer, presumably recognizing it as something novel—which suggests that he can distinguish between a quantity of eight and a quantity of sixteen. If you were to try preferential looking without habituating the baby first, he probably would not look longer at one set of dots than at the other, since neither is more intrinsically entertaining. Bore him with one set of dots, though, and you should be able to tell something. (At the Harvard lab, looking times are measured by two people who each use a button to indicate when they see the baby look away; their results are then compared and consolidated by a computer. One day, in Spelke's lab, I watched a researcher named Ariel Grace flash the same face on the screen again and again for a baby. "Congratulations, Alice," she murmured as she saw the baby's looking time fall below the target number of seconds. "You're officially bored.")

Spelke's renown in psychology is based, in part, on her use of looking-time measures to answer questions not only about perception but also about cognition. Did infants have expectations of how the world worked—and could you tell what those expectations were by determining what surprised them? Starting in the eighties, Spelke and several other researchers—including Renee Baillargeon, of the University of Illinois, and Karen Wynn, of Yale—developed a provocative variation on the preferential-looking scheme, usually called the "violation of expectations" study. These experiments were staged a little like magic shows. Babies sat in a darkened room, watching scenarios of varying degrees of plausibility unfold on a small stage. Spelke, for example, showed the babies a ball rolling along a path with an obstruction in the middle of it. A screen was lowered and then raised to reveal the ball either resting against the obstruction—where it logically should be—or on the other side of it, as though the ball had magically rolled through a solid surface. Spelke found that babies looked longer at the unexpected event. In a 1983 experiment, Spelke and her colleague Philip Kellman placed a gray wooden barrier on the stage, parallel to the proscenium and raised a few inches. The baby watched as what appeared to be a long stick, its tips extended above and below the barrier, crossed the stage. Spelke and Kellman wanted to know if a three-month-old baby would assume—as an adult would—that he was watching just one stick, even though the middle portion was concealed. Then they lifted the barrier, revealing sometimes one stick, sometimes two. Their hypothesis was that if babies found the appearance of two sticks strange they would look longer at the two sticks. The babies did, staring at the two sticks thirty seconds longer.

Spelke and Kellman's finding contradicted Piaget's theory of object permanence, and it galvanized other psychol-



"Don't forget to call the Fire Department."

ogists. Piaget's notion was based on experiments with his children which involved motor skill—watching, for example, to see whether his daughter Jacqueline continued to search for a toy duck after Piaget hid it under a sheet. Spelke thought that limitations in babies' ability to lift and grab, more than limitations in what they could represent in their minds, were the real obstacle. In a series of papers, Spelke boldly argued that babies did not have to depend on a fumbling, trial-and-error exploration of their world for all their knowledge of it. They were born with some knowledge—though it would need testing and revising along the way.

Spelke and like-minded researchers emphasize that they are talking about a baby's "implicit knowledge"—no infant, even if he could talk, could say why he can't walk through a wall. They are not claiming that babies spin theories about motion and gravity while wearing out their pacifiers. As Karen Wynn explained, the kind of understanding that babies reveal by looking longer at an unprecedented event is "available only to their attentional systems. It's a kind of general alert—'Pay attention, something interesting and unexpected has just happened.' That need not be explicitly available at a conscious, salient level; it could be at an automatic, unconscious one."

Some more recent studies of toddlers and preschoolers have raised a seeming paradox: the older children's sense of solid objects appears to be less secure than that of infants. (A 2003 article on this topic is subtitled "Why Do Infants Look So Smart and Toddlers Look So Dumb?") Rebecca Rosenberg, a psychology graduate student at Harvard, has lately been running a study in which she shows two-year-olds a cabinet with a shelf in the middle and a sliding door that conceals the front. With the sliding door open, she drops a Koosh ball on the shelf and asks her subject if the ball is on top or under it. The toddler usually confidently responds, "On top!" But when Rosenberg conceals the shelf with the sliding door, and drops the ball again, most children have no idea where the ball is—they will say that it has vanished or fallen to the bottom of the cabinet (sailing right through a solid wood shelf). It isn't until at least the age of three that kids can perform this task successfully, Rosenberg told me. "It's just astounding to see the toddlers fail at it," she said. "We know that couple-month-old infants already know about solidity. Do they somehow unlearn what they knew as infants? That seems unlikely."

One possibility, of course, is that Spelke's infant studies, or their conclusions, are somehow flawed. Spelke said that she is interested in the toddler studies, but she is not worried by them. She believes that the knowledge we have in one system (say, the attentional system) isn't always available to us in others (say, the verbal or motor systems). Even adults show this split. Wynn told me about some recent studies in which adults are asked to predict where a ball that rolls around and around a circular ramp will finally come out. Adults, she said, are "terrible at it if they're asked to draw the pathway the ball took, or make a verbal prediction of the path it will take. But if they are asked to reach in and find the ball, their hand automatically goes to the right place. With their motor system, they can anticipate correctly, but that knowledge isn't accessible to them verbally."

To the layperson, there's something faintly comic about looking-time studies. So much strenuous effort is made to engage the attention and record the fleeting stares of bobble-headed babies who are distracted by their own feet and fingers; and so many lofty claims about human nature are being based on these odd little encounters. Nevertheless, the looking-time paradigm has proved remarkably durable, and is widely trusted by researchers in the field. Brain imaging may be the next wave in infant studies, but it's not yet very useful. Babies don't lie flat and hold perfectly still, as an M.R.I. requires, unless they're asleep—and if they're asleep you can't show them anything.

When Spelke was an undergraduate at Harvard, in the late sixties, she studied with the eminent child psychologist Jerome Kagan. "I was doing an undergrad thesis, looking at attachment and emotional reactions in babies," she recalled. "But I realized that we didn't have a clue about what babies actually understood. I really wanted to study these emotional and social issues. But it seemed as if we first needed to know some basic things about what infants perceived and understood. So I made what's become a thirty-year detour into human nature and the human mind."

The first major stop on the detour was Cornell, where Spelke earned her Ph.D. in an expeditious four years. One of her mentors was Eleanor Gibson, the grande dame of developmental psychology, who was gifted at designing elegant experiments. The most famous of these is known as the "visual cliff." (In the waiting area at Spelke's laboratory, a small diorama depicts the experiment, with a doll standing in for the baby.) In the 1957 study, a sturdy sheet of glass was laid on a three-foot-high platform, with some of the glass extending beyond the platform. Gibson pasted checkerboarded paper between the glass and the platform; she also placed the paper on the floor, beneath the overhanging glass, creating the appearance of a checkerboarded "cliff." Would a baby who began crawling along the patterned path sensibly stop at the edge of the platform, even if his mother were coaxing him to continue onto the glass overhang? The answer was yes. The babies clearly had depth perception, Gibson concluded, and they did not require direct sensory experience of a cliff edge to know the most important thing about it.

Spelke said of Gibson, "She was the best experimental psychologist I ever met. I've spent my whole life aspiring to be like her. She combined hard-nosed experimental rigor with an insistence that the work you do be directly connected to real-world phenomena. Never do a study the motivation of which is to understand the result of a previous study. Do a study the motivation of which is to understand how people are functioning in the real world."

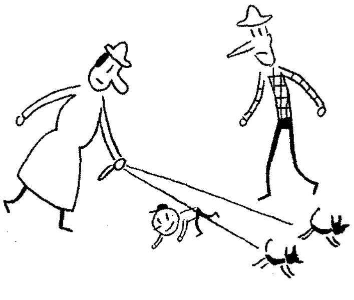
Spelke found Gibson inspiring for another reason, too. Gibson managed to have both a prominent scientific career and a family, without much help at home; her husband, a theorist of perception, had adopted a quixotic schedule that involved working all night and sleeping most of the day. Spelke recalled, "What most impressed me was that she could carry on with her whole life of teaching, running her lab, and doing these absolutely superb experiments, all while raising two children and taking out the garbage and cutting down the Christmas tree. I looked at her life, and I thought, Boy, this is an existence proof. This life is possible. Totally insane, maybe, but possible."

The first breakthrough in Spelke's quest to understand how much infants knew occurred at Cornell. Piaget had contended that in babies the five senses operated separately, and that "inter-modal perception"—the capacity to recognize, for instance, that the clattering sound you just heard and the pot lid you just saw your mother drop are part of the same event—developed later, in toddlerhood. Spelke was skeptical of the Piaget line; in the mid-seventies, she devised an experiment to test it. She showed babies two films, on side-by-side screens, while playing the soundtrack for just one of them. Babies focussed on the screen for which the soundtrack was appropriate, correctly matching the picture and the sound.

Spelke's first academic post was at the University of Pennsylvania. After nine years, she moved to Cornell, then to the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at M.I.T.; in 2001, she accepted an offer from Harvard, in part so that she could work alongside the cognitive psychologist Susan Carey, with whom she enjoys "productive disagreements." Along the way, Spelke was married briefly and later had a daughter, Bridget, who is now a premed student at McGill University, in Montreal. When Spelke was thirty-seven, she met her second husband, Elliott Blass, a psychology professor who was then at Johns Hopkins and is now at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Spelke recalled, "I was raising Bridget as a single mother, and felt quite complete and satisfied and happy in my life, which I think is always the moment at which you fall in love with someone." She and Blass had a son, Joe, who will enter the University of Chicago this fall. Blass studies motivation and emotions. "We sort of divide up the field between us," Spelke said. "But we'd rather talk about movies." She went on, "I adore movies. And, from the time my kids were old enough to keep their eyes open for two hours, they've been going to movies. We bought our present house because it's walking distance from the Harvard Film Archive. And, when we first moved in, it was a hot August and then a hot September, and I remember watching Leni Riefenstahl on the Berlin Olympics with them for *days*." When I expressed surprise over this choice, she said earnestly, "They're gripping. Oh, they're wonderful movies for kids."

Spelke and her husband have a second home, a ramshackle farmhouse in the Loire Valley; they've spent all their sabbatical years in France, as well as nearly every summer while Bridget and Joe were growing up. To Spelke's delight, both children are bilingual and "bicultural," with close friends in both countries. She wasn't always so sanguine, though, about how this particular experiment would turn out. When she enrolled her then three-year-old son at the local *école maternelle*, he announced that he wasn't going to say a word all year long. "For Joe's first four months, the entire class would be focussed on some activity, and Joe would be off in a corner looking at Tintin books," she recalled. "And I thought, He's never going to learn a word of this language; he's never going to be integrated; I'm a terrible mother. And then, four months in, we were walking into class, and he said, 'I've changed my mind now, Mom, I'm going to talk.' And the next time I went in he was speaking complete sentences in French and singing all the songs, which he had learned all the words to while pretending not to pay attention. Both kids said it was the best year of their lives, and made them feel they can go anywhere or do anything."

Spelke mistrusts products that are marketed as brain boosters for babies, but, in an e-mail, she said that she thinks it's "a good idea, whenever possible, for parents to expose their babies to people, places, and events that they themselves love and want their children to enjoy with them later on. There's little explicit memory for events or places that are experienced in infancy, but I do think (and some research supports this) that there is implicit emotional memory for them." Spelke may never test this notion in her laboratory, but she is satisfied with the data generated by her family. She went on, "My hunch is that my own children love the things I love—travel, movies, blundering along in new languages—in part because they have been exposed to these things with me, literally since birth."



Spelke's work has always been oriented toward finding the universal human attributes that lie beneath what she calls—optimistically, perhaps—the "superficial" cognitive differences of language, culture, and gender. At M.I.T., Spelke was inspired by Noam Chomsky's ideas about the properties shared by all languages. "Beneath the surface variability of human languages are deep commonalities," she said in a public lecture with Chomsky last year. "Common underlying principles have to be there, because children have to be able to learn any of the world's languages depending on where they happen to be born. And, as a matter of fact, they learn these languages very rapidly with no instruction, and from rather minimal and fragmentary evidence."

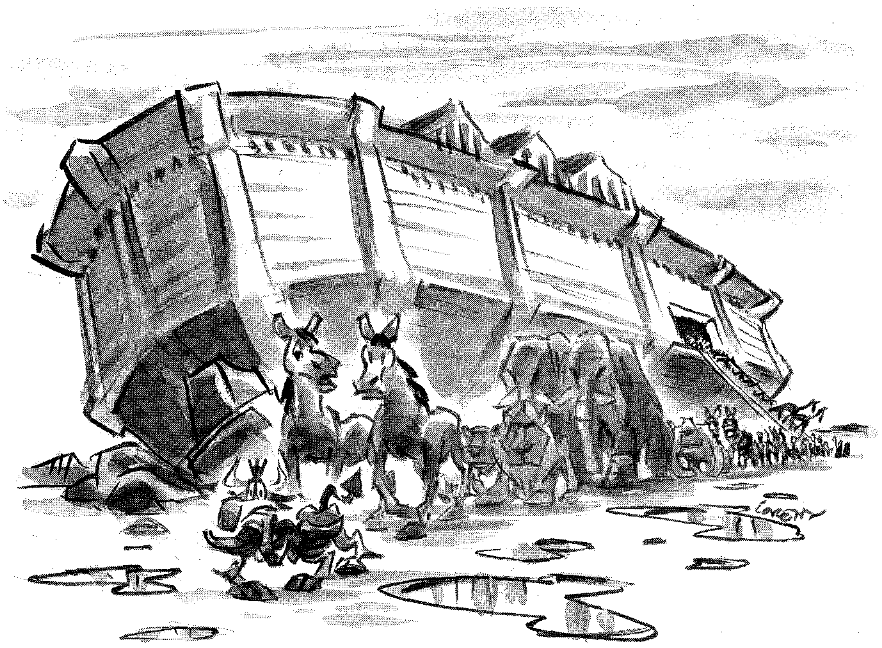
Lately, Spelke's cross-cultural preoccupations have been sparking ideas for her kind of fastidious, imaginative, and weirdly specific experiments. (Working out the kinks of studies is clearly something she relishes. More than once, I heard her exclaim, "Damn, this is hard!" while talking to students about refining an experimental design—but she always said it with a grin.) A few years ago, Spelke, working with Susan Hespos, of Northwestern University, fashioned a study around a curious linguistic distinction that is made by Korean but not by English. Korean speakers indicate whether an object fits loosely or tightly with something else—a ring on a finger, a shoe in a box, a cup inside another cup—whereas English speakers simply use "in" or "on." (In English, a wedding ring is "on" your finger, but it could also be "on" the kitchen counter.) Spelke and Hespos relied on looking-time measures to see if five-month-old infants living in English-speaking households would also note the loose-versus-tight distinction—by looking longer at a cylinder that fitted loosely into a container after they'd been habituated to looking at a cylinder that fitted tightly, and vice versa. The babies detected the difference. Apparently, before their own language had convinced them that the distinction wasn't a vital one, they carried a concept of it in their minds. In 2004, Spelke and Hespos wrote up their findings in modest, technical language for the journal *Nature*. ("Our research focuses on the crosscutting conceptual distinctions between actions producing loose- and tight-fitting contact relationships . . .") As a result, the layman might not have noticed that they were making an aggressive philosophical claim: that thought preëxists language. "These findings suggest that humans possess a rich set of concepts before we learn language," Spelke told the *Financial Times* when the study came out. In the science press, her colleagues concurred. "How do we think about the world before we are corrupted by culture and the world?" the psychologist Paul Bloom asked. "One way to learn is to look at babies."

Spelke has recently explored another way of addressing Bloom's question. She has been working with a team of French researchers, including the linguist Pierre Pica and the neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene, who are studying the Mundurukú, an isolated Amazonian tribe. (Since the Mundurukú are suspicious of outsiders, Pica is the only team member who goes to the Amazon. He travels to the jungle with a solar-powered laptop, and videotapes all the testing sessions.) The Mundurukú don't have maps or compasses, words for any geometric shape except the circle, a counting routine, or words for numbers above five. Nonetheless, according to the team's experiments, they do have a sense of geometry that allows them to navigate efficiently. And they also have the two core math abilities that Spelke has identified: the ability to differentiate between quantities and the primordial sense of addition and subtraction. When tribe members were given maps for the first time, they were able to orient themselves correctly and find hidden objects. Mundurukú children, when shown five right triangles and one isosceles triangle, and asked, in their language, to point to the "ugly" or "weird" one, performed as well as American children on a similar task. The Mundurukú could add and subtract with numbers under five, and they could do approximate number comparisons as successfully as the educated French speakers who constituted the control group. ("Pierre Pica came back from the Amazon with these necklaces," Spelke announced, laughing, at a recent lab meeting. "One of them has got a carving of hands on it, and several of the hands have only four fingers on them. It was, like, 'Look! Hands have approximately five fingers!' ") For Spelke, all this has been further confirmation of the notion that certain core abilities emerge spontaneously, and universally.

Spelke's universalism, combined with her view that some mental capacities are inborn, has led her to an unusual place in academe. She believes in a fundamental human nature but parts company with other Darwinians when she casts doubt on the idea that cognitive gender differences are innate. A committed liberal who talks indignantly about race and gender discrimination, she diverges from most left-wing academics—who like to conceive of human beings as "socially constructed"—when she posits a biological basis to discrimination. Some of the newest studies in her lab examine whether babies make distinctions between people on the basis of race, or the language they speak. A recent study, led by Spelke's graduate student Katherine Kinzler, showed that twelve-month-old babies are more likely to choose food offered by a stranger who speaks their parents' language, even though they don't yet speak themselves, and are only beginning to understand much of what is being said to them, and even though, at the moment when they are offered the gift, the stranger isn't speaking. It could be, Spelke said, that there is "a core system whose job is to take all the people out there and divide them up into groups, so that when you encounter new people, or even familiar people about whom you have limited information, you can make inferences about their behavior and decide what you're going to do."

Recently, when another graduate student, Kristin Shutts, presented the lab's initial findings at a conference in South Africa, the response from some scientists was vitriolic—the researchers were accused of "reifying" the concept of race. Spelke knows that if further studies eventually confirm the existence of an "us versus them" instinct in babies, it won't be a welcome finding. But she believes that we shouldn't be wary of asking the question—"Just because babies see it doesn't mean it's right," she said. In her view, nurture, or human will, is ultimately more powerful than nature, because humans are capable of rejecting certain aspects of their evolutionary inheritance—recognizing them as wrong, either factually or morally or both.

She said, "Suppose it turned out that babies were predisposed to racism—that, once they figure out what race their parents are, they negatively evaluate people of other races. The worry would be that such a finding somehow justifies racism in adults, or makes us more defeatist about combatting racism. I would put it exactly backward. I would say, insofar as racism



"Poor thing. The first night out, her husband fell overboard."

exists in human societies, we have a phenomenon and we need to know what produced it. Cognitive scientists have learned over the last couple of decades that people are really bad at probabilistic reasoning. We don't conclude from this that we should fold all our statistics departments! We say, 'Let's try and understand what it is about the way that we think about numbers that makes us bad at understanding probability, and figure out what we can do to *overcome* those weaknesses.' "

Spelke is equally determined to overcome what she considers to be sexist attitudes about women and science. Her debate with Steven Pinker was ostensibly on the limited subject of whether intrinsic gender differences accounted for the paucity of women among the ranks of tenured engineering, physical science, and math professors at élite institutions like Harvard. Nevertheless, the debate ranged farther, into basic questions about men's and women's ambitions and aptitudes. It was a civil occasion, certainly, but lively enough that the Harvard *Crimson* couldn't quite resist calling the exchange a "showdown of the sexes."

When Pinker stepped up to the lectern, he chided Spelke, his fellow-innatist, for embracing "the extreme nurture position." He took issue with public remarks that Spelke had recently made at a campus panel, in which she declared that the evidence against an intrinsic male aptitude in science was overwhelming—"as conclusive as any finding I know of in science." She had added that she found it hard to see how anyone could make a case for the other side. Pinker paused, then said, to an eruption of laughter, "Well, we certainly aren't seeing the stereotypical gender difference in confidence here!"

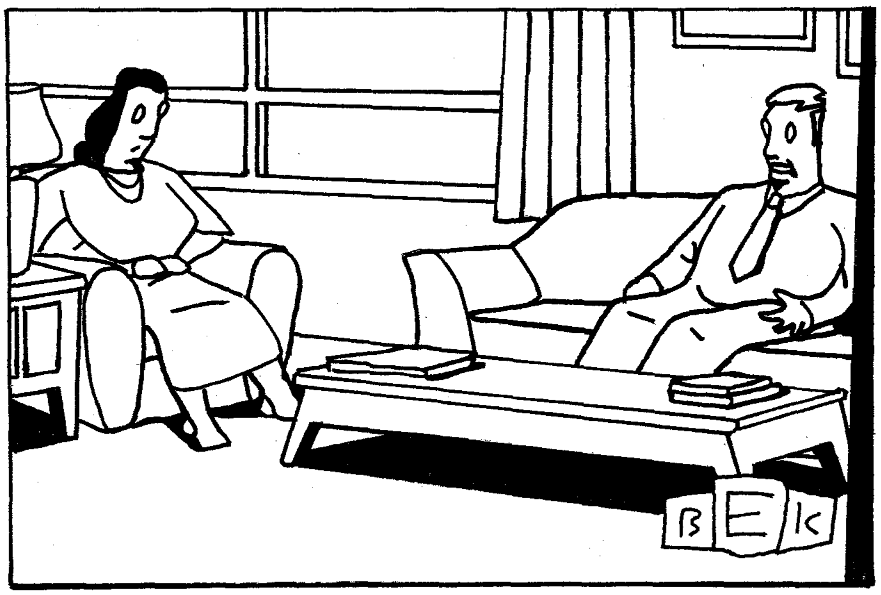
Spelke had argued that gender bias and social expectations, some of them quite subtle, were the significant factors behind women's limited presence in top scientific jobs. (For example, women tend to be evaluated for tenure in the same years that they are most likely to be having children.) But she had not claimed that men and women are indistinguishable in their cognitive profiles—just that the differences they do show don't add up to a clear advantage for one sex or the other. There were good data to suggest, she noted, that men and women tend to resort to different strategies when solving certain types of math problems, for instance. Spelke elaborated on this at the debate with her usual punctiliousness:

> If a task can only be solved by representing the geometry of the layout, we do not see a difference between men and women. But if the task can be accomplished either by representing geometry or by representing individual landmarks, girls tend to rely on the landmarks, and boys on geometry. To take another example, when you compare the shapes of two objects of different orientations, there are two different strategies you can use. You can attempt a holistic rotation of one of the objects into registration with the other, or you can do point-by-point featural comparisons of the two objects. Men are more likely to do the first; women are more likely to do the second. . . .
>
> Because of these differences, males and females sometimes show differing cognitive profiles on timed tests. When you have to solve problems fast, some strategies will be faster than others. Thus females perform better at some verbal, mathematical, and spatial tasks, and males perform better at other verbal, mathematical, and spatial tasks. This pattern of differing profiles is *not* well captured by the generalization, often bandied about in the popular press, that women are verbal and men are spatial. There doesn't seem to be any more evidence for that than there was for the idea that women are people-oriented and men are object-oriented. Rather the differences are more subtle.

Pinker countered that, at the level of achievement they were discussing, small differences might matter a lot. He wasn't talking about a gap in general intelligence—he agreed that neither gender had an advantage in this regard—or about the kinds of basic core abilities that Spelke had studied in infants. He wasn't even talking about over-all mathematical and spatial abilities, where, he conceded, men and women might well be equal. He was referring to rarefied competencies—like the ability to mentally rotate shapes—at which men tend to be faster and better.

"In many ways, this is an exotic phenomenon," Pinker said. "It involves biologically unprepared talents and temperaments: evolution certainly did not shape any part of the mind to do the work of a professor of mechanical engineering at M.I.T., for example." At issue here, Pinker argued, were "extremes of achievement. Most women are not qualified to be math professors at Harvard because most men aren't qualified to be math professors at Harvard." Pinker noted that the I.Q.s of females are less variable, predominating in the middle range, whereas males slightly predominate at both ends, accounting for both "more idiots and more prodigies." Beyond that, Pinker said, loomed bigger, psychological sex differences. Men across cultures, he noted, constituted the more risk-taking and competitive sex—though why risk-taking and competitiveness were more adaptive attributes for, say, aspiring mathematicians than for aspiring sociologists wasn't exactly clear.

After Pinker and Spelke had given their talks, they sat at a table onstage, and listened to each other without interrupting. But when Pinker spoke, Spelke wore one of those smiles which suggest a certain effort—and when she spoke she used her large hands to make sweeping gestures, as if she were dismissing one silly notion after another. When Pinker started talking about how "the most subjective fields in



"Let's go somewhere fun and not really experience it."

academia—the social sciences, the humanities, the helping professions" had the greatest representation of women because they jibed with "what gave women satisfaction in life," Spelke looked as though she'd had enough. "I think it's a really interesting possibility that the forces that were active in our evolutionary past have led men and women to evolve somewhat differing concerns," she began. "But to jump from that possibility to the present, and draw conclusions about what people's motives will be for pursuing one or another career, is *way* too big a stretch." The career choices people pursue now, she concluded acidly, were "radically different from anything that anybody faced back in the Pleistocene."

Pinker was suggesting that, because of both sexual selection and parental-investment issues, women are selected to be more nurturing and men more competitive. Suppose that this were true, Spelke said, in the final words of the debate. What sort of motivation made a better scientist? Was it "competitive motives like those J. D. Watson described in 'The Double Helix' to get the structure of DNA before Linus Pauling did? Or nurturant motives of the kind that Doug Melton"—the Harvard developmental biologist—"described recently to explain why he's going into stem-cell research: to find a cure for juvenile diabetes, which his children suffer from? I think it's anything but clear how motives from our past translate into modern contexts. We would need to do the experiment, getting rid of discrimination and social pressures, in order to find out."

The literature on sex difference is contradictory and confusing, and since the Summers upheaval there has been one volley after another. In a recent issue of *Nature*, the Stanford neurobiologist Ben Barres published a commentary on having done science as both a man and a woman. He had a sex change at forty-two, and found that he was treated with more respect upon becoming a male—evidence, he claimed, that "discrimination" is what holds female researchers back. On the other side, Louann Brizendine, a neuropsychiatrist at the University of California at San Francisco, has just published "The Female Brain," in which she claims, among other things, that women use twenty thousand words a day, whereas men use an economical seven thousand. (The implication, presumably, is that women are better suited for gossiping or novel-writing than for, say, composing scientific abstracts.) None of these arguments settle the matter, though a firm belief in gender difference does seem to produce more best-sellers—think of "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus"—which could suggest either that the gender-difference view accords more with people's common sense and experience or that Spelke's hunch is right, and we are evolutionarily predisposed to dwell on difference. In the end, Spelke's belief in universal aptitude may be proved only if women eventually do join, in significant numbers, the ranks of the math and science faculties where they are currently sparse. A hundred years ago, plenty of people believed that the reason there weren't more female doctors was that women were intellectually and physically ill-suited for the job—and that these shortcomings were innate and immutable. Today, half of the medical students in the country are women.

Recently, I asked Pinker about the cause of his disagreement with Spelke, given their shared belief in innate forms of cognition. "It's hard to know," Pinker said. "Gender might be a factor. Also, my brand of nativism is tied more explicitly to evolutionary biology, which opens the door to differences between men and women in the same way there are differences between the sexes in almost all species." He added that, generally, what Spelke thinks is most interesting about human psychology is what we all have in common. He tended to agree, he said, but not to the extent that Spelke did.

Spelke's mode of inquiry, as fruitful as it has been, can sometimes seem rigid and doctrinaire. Are looking-time measures really equal to a task as complex as assessing, say, whether there is a universal human impulse toward prejudice? Can infants really be said to have such a tendency, or is Spelke overloading her interpretation of a baby's extended glance? Spelke's belief in hardwired capacities strikes some developmental psychologists as reductive. Alison Gopnik, a baby researcher at Berkeley, has described Spelke's idea of "core knowledge" as a "fundamentally oversimplified theoretical account."

Indeed, in some recent infant studies, babies' preferences seem to show surprising mutability. A 2006 study that Spelke's researchers are looking at with interest—one of the authors, Talee Ziv, is now working at Spelke's lab—involved Caucasian infants raised in Israel, African infants raised in Ethiopia, and Ethiopian infants raised in Israel. Presented with photos on a screen, the white Israeli infants preferred looking at new faces of their own race; African babies raised in Ethiopia preferred to look at African faces. But the Ethiopian-Israeli infants, who had been exposed since birth to people of both races, showed no preference. The import of this study is ambiguous, Spelke said. The finding could mean that babies aren't born prejudiced after all—that they learn to be wary of others only if they grow up in an isolated environment. Or it could mean that babies are programmed to trust people who look more like their own parents, and that this instinct can be counterbalanced through enlightened education.

If the latter interpretation proved to be the case, Spelke would be optimistic. As she recently posted on *Edge*, a Web publication that airs scientific controversies, "Humans are capable of discovering that our core conceptions are false and of replacing them with truer ones." Just as our core intuitions about geometry once led humans to believe that the world was flat—until the science that humans perfected proved otherwise—core intuitions might lead us to believe that linguistic and racial differences mean something more fundamental than they really do.

"Nobody should be troubled by our research, whatever we come to find," Spelke told me. "Everybody should be troubled by the phenomena that motivate it: the pervasive tendency of people all over the world to categorize others into different social groups, despite our common and universal humanity, and to endow these groups with social and emotional significance that fuels ethnic conflict and can even lead to war and genocide." This mirrors her belief that, in time, feminism will embolden more women to take up high-level careers in the physical sciences, and more of us will recognize how alike men's and women's minds really are. For Spelke, who has spent most of her life documenting the core knowledge that we're born with, the most important thing about it is our uniquely human ability to rise above it. ♦

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

DEERFIELD IN THE DESERT

A king brings a boarding school to the Middle East.

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

At Deerfield Academy, an élite boarding school in the hills of western Massachusetts, sneaking out of a dormitory at night is considered a relatively mild form of malfeasance. It doesn't carry the dishonor or the opprobrium of cheating or vandalism, or require sex, alcohol, or drugs, although, of course, it precludes none of the above. In the days when Deerfield was a boys' school (it went coed in 1989), one late-night destination was a girls' boarding school down the road, whose name—Stoneleigh-Burnham—seemed a happy parody not only of preppiness but also of the mischief that can occasionally accompany it. Regardless, midnight rambles can be magical—giant elms casting strange shadows, the night playing tricks as you prowl the grounds or slip into the woods. There is nothing quite like being a teen-ager outside at night in a forbidden place. Your mere presence is transgressive: an exaltation of adolescence.

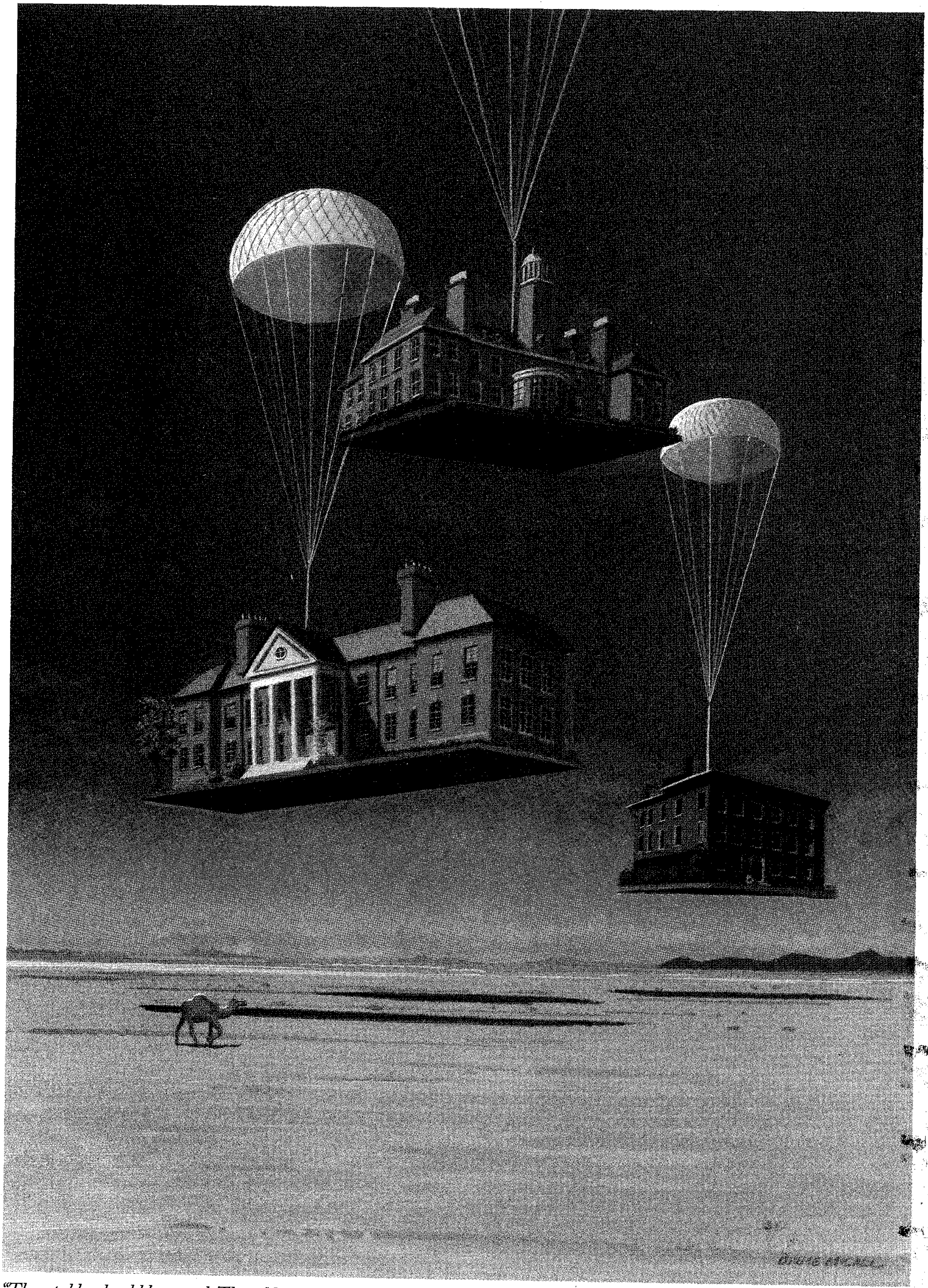
One night, twenty-seven years ago, four Deerfield boys bolted from their dormitory and gathered on a green in the middle of the campus. They had an old Army flare. One of them, George Faux, known as Gig (pronounced "Jidge"), was the son of a National Guard pilot, and had occasional access to ordnance, as well as to fireworks. None of them had handled a flare before, and it was too dark to read the instructions. "What if we just pull this thing?" another boy said, indicating a cap on the flare. He was Abdullah, the eldest son of King Hussein of Jordan; Faux and the two other boys, Perry Vella and Chip Smith, called him Ab. His bodyguards, who usually accompanied him everywhere, were likely asleep in their quarters, in the basement of his dorm; they also had a house off campus. Without waiting for an answer, Abdullah pulled the cap, and the flare shot skyward in a blaze of sparks, bathing the campus in spectral pink light. The boys' presence was suddenly very conspicuous. They scattered. But then the flare, held aloft by a parachute, began to drift toward the gymnasium, and the boys ran after it, their fear of getting caught trumped by their fear of burning down the school—a gallant ordering of priorities. The flare floated past the gym, over an expanse of playing fields, in the direction of a stretch of woods. They followed the flare past a copse of trees and into another field. Finally, it dropped onto the grass and sputtered out. The boys retreated in darkness to their dorm rooms. No one got caught.

Abdullah and Faux had met as sophomores, after being assigned to the same table in the dining hall. (Vella had noticed Abdullah earlier, on the soccer field, playing in tennis shoes.) Ab and Gig quickly discovered that they had similar interests: sports, airplanes, hunting, guns. As seniors, they served together as proctors of their dormitory. "We ruled the dorm with collegiality but certainly with a lot of fear, too," Faux recalled recently. "Kids that age can be evil geniuses." Abdullah's friends came from a range of backgrounds: in addition to Faux, who was from southeastern Massachusetts, there was Vella, a Maltese hockey goalie from Queens, and Smith, from Darien, Connecticut—"kind of the quintessential prep-school guy," Faux said. Vella referred to them as the Fearsome Foursome.

Abdullah loved Deerfield. He has often said that his years there were the happiest of his life. It was his third boarding school. At the age of seven, he was sent to St. Edmund's, in Hindhead, England; then, to Eaglebrook, a school just up the hill from Deerfield, where, as the first Arab student (and a small one) in the school's history, he was chum in the treacherous waters of dormitory life. During five years at Eaglebrook, he got into a fight almost every day, until he became captain of the wrestling team. By comparison, Deerfield was a placid and dignified place. He arrived in 1977, for tenth grade. In Abdullah's eyes, Deerfield was the opposite of posh, its code of Yankee self-reliance a signal not of entitlement but of its renunciation. Whoever you are, you sleep in the same quarters, eat the same mystery meat, and run the same wind sprints. No one has a car (even if your bodyguards do). The longtime head of the dining hall, Jim Smith, used to tell a story about Abdullah's genial complaint that bussing tables, a chore for all Deerfield students, was beneath him. Smith replied, "Your father may be the King of Jordan, but I'm the king of the dining hall."

After graduation, Abdullah enrolled, as his father had, at Sandhurst, the British military college. (Hussein had attended boarding school at Victoria College in Egypt.) He studied at Oxford and in the foreign-service program at Georgetown, and entered the Jordanian military. Although he was Hussein's eldest son (by the second of his four wives, a British officer's daughter named Toni Gardiner, who took the name Princess Muna), he was not the crown prince; his uncle Hassan, Hussein's brother, was next in line. This arrangement enabled Abdullah to pursue a military career, as well as a princely life style, free of undue scrutiny or the burdens of statecraft. He became a pilot and a major general in the Jordanian Special Forces, and developed a reputation as something of a playboy, before marrying Rania Al-Yassin, a Palestinian from Kuwait, in 1993. Still, he was able to indulge plebeian inclinations—he had a cameo, for example, in a 1995 episode of "Star Trek: Voyager"—until Hussein abruptly named him his heir, in 1999, two weeks before dying.

When Abdullah attended commencement at Deerfield, on the occasion of his twentieth reunion, in 2000, he had been king for sixteen months. He arrived by helicopter, and his classmates veered between calling him Ab and Your Majesty. He bunked in the headmaster's house, with his security detail, and for the banquet requested his favorite dish: cheese-



"These tables should be round. The tables at Deerfield are round," the King said. Illustrations by Bruce McCall.

burgers. The next morning, the headmaster and some other administrators asked whether Deerfield could help him in any way. "Interesting you should ask," he replied. "I'm thinking of replicating Deerfield in Jordan. What do you think?"

"Prep school": the phrase, taking its place next to "country club" and "trust fund," curdles in the egalitarian mind. New England boarding schools are often considered fortresses of exclusion, perpetuators of stratification and snobbery. In Abdullah's view, however, Deerfield was a diverse place. "It's that atmosphere that he wants to duplicate," Vella said. "Where race, color, and financial status don't matter." That's a funny thing to say about a prep school, but Abdullah felt that Deerfield's secular curriculum; its emphasis on critical thinking, camaraderie, tolerance, and sacrifice; and its commitment to the well-rounded boy (and, later, girl) were key elements in the creation of leaders—especially those comfortable with the ways of the West, not least its college-admissions offices and its network of business and government grandees. Leaders, and therefore Deerfields, were what he felt his country and region needed.

Jordan, a creation of the British after the First World War, has no natural resources to speak of—no oil or gas, and very little water. To survive, it must devise other ways of seeming indispensable. Traditionally, as a neighbor or claimant to disputed territories, it has employed diplomatic guile to attract support, and it has long cultivated an educated populace; its greatest asset may be its so-called "intellectual capital," its expatriates—"the workforce in the Gulf, the doctors, the engineers, the airline pilots," as the King put it. He has made education and technology top priorities, and he intends King's Academy, as his Jordanian Deerfield facsimile came to be called, to be a showcase for both. It is scheduled to open in September, 2007.

There have long been Western secondary schools in the Middle East, most of them for the sons and daughters of expatriates and diplomats. Some of them take a limited number of boarders and embrace, to varying degrees, certain values that may subvert or contradict those of their hosts. They tend to have been built on the British public-school model or by missionaries, and to have a colonial disposition. And there are esteemed Western universities, such as the American University of Beirut. But no one has sought to emulate a New England boarding school, or seen in one, as Abdullah does, a seed of regional salvation.

In the United States, boarding schools can be a refuge—from commercial culture, from the city, from the suburbs, from parents, or (put another way) from reality. Presumably, a Middle Eastern version would be, for better and worse, doubly remote. Abdullah is not the first or last Arab leader to recognize that many of the problems afflicting the region arise out of disenfranchisement and desperation. One of the most vexing challenges facing the Arab world is what to do about its throngs of unemployed young men (to say nothing of the women) who have few prospects, no political recourse, and an increasing susceptibility to radical talk. Yet his school is not really meant for them. A sumptuous and insular institution like King's Academy could possibly compound this state of affairs, even if only symbolically, and a skeptic might find his dedication to it risible, in a time when the region may be on the verge of a wider war. To be fair, the school is just a part of a grand strategy. He and Queen Rania have launched a campaign to reform the entire education system in Jordan, especially its public schools, which make New York's look like Sweden's. Still, the King maintains both his faith in the remedial powers of a secular élite and his heartfelt attachment to the place that helped instill this faith. Deerfield (and not, say, Stuyvesant or Choate) is the model, because it is where he went.

In 2004, Abdullah, who as a member of the Hashemite dynasty claims direct kinship to the Prophet Muhammad, delivered to the world's Muslims a call for moderation and tolerance. The address was called the Amman Message, and was essentially a high-minded gloss on his effort to involve his countrymen in a modern world that Islamists wish either to repudiate or to destroy. He is considered an enlightened monarch, insofar as he is part of a young generation of leaders in the region who say things that Westerners like to hear and are eager to be in business with the West.

You might say that King's Academy is a pedagogical component of the Amman Message. Abdullah hopes that the student body will eventually number six hundred and will comprise kids from all over the region, including Israel, and some exchange students from the United States. Thirty per cent of them will receive at least partial scholarships. The rest will likely come from wealthy families, mostly in Jordan and in the Gulf; the tuition is high—twenty-eight thousand dollars a year—even compared with other élite schools in Jordan. There will be girls as well as boys. Although it may be hard to picture a coed boarding school in a land where honor killing is still tolerated, the families who are inclined to send their sons and daughters to King's Academy will presumably be those who are comfortable with the school's founding precepts. Nonetheless, six hundred mostly well-to-do boys and girls from the Middle East will behave differently from a similar number of mostly well-to-do East Coast Wasps. Student life can often resist engineering from above.

To have a New England boarding school, you need a New England headmaster. Two years ago, Eric Widmer, who had been the Deerfield headmaster for a decade, announced that he planned to retire this year. Shortly afterward, an associate of the King's asked Widmer if he would consider being the founding headmaster at King's Academy. "His Majesty is a very persuasive person," Widmer told me, when I visited him at Deerfield last fall. In June, he and his wife, Meera Viswanathan, moved to Jordan.

Widmer, who is sixty-six, is tall and amiable, with a large head and a wide, flat smile. He dresses, as you might expect, in gray flannels or wide-wale corduroys, striped oxford shirts, tweed jackets, and school ties. He has a slight limp that suggests a man who played football in the days before arthroscopy. He likes gin Martinis and Garcia y Vega cigars, and speaks slowly, in long, self-consciously complex and punch-line-bound sentences that are a cause of occasional half-serious exasperation to his wife. He exhorts his students to use, in place of profanity, such phrases as "Oh heavens" and "Gracious me."

Despite the country-scholar mien, he seems more worldly than his predecessor Frank Boyden, who served as Deerfield's headmaster and patriarch for nearly seventy years, and who pretty much built the school, in his own flinty and idiosyncratic image. Although Deerfield is more than two hundred years old, it was a one-room schoolhouse, with an enrollment of fourteen, when Boyden took over, in 1902. The story of his transformation of the place, told in these pages forty years ago by John McPhee (Deerfield '49), is Deerfield's Pentateuch, and, among prep-school-founder legends—a crowded, if parochial, category—Boyden's may stand tallest of all. Boyden was a stubborn and vigorous oddball: he sometimes played on the students' sports teams or worked the switchboard; he was opposed to the teaching of calculus and art. But he had a knack for turning boys into young men. He kept them busy, demanded a great deal, and forgave them nearly everything but remorselessness. "His school evolved naturally, gradually, and surprisingly," McPhee wrote. "He had no plan and no theory, but he proved himself to be an educator by intuition." It is no small thing to create a school, with its own values and traditions, its pedagogical peculiarities and munificent alumni. And, unlike a lot of American prep schools, Deerfield wasn't built on a preëxisting (that is, English) model; it was, as McPhee wrote, an "indigenous institution."

Deerfield has long been considered one of the better New England boarding schools, in terms of selectivity, facilities, S.A.T. scores, college placement, and endowment. It has a list of distinguished alumni: among them are John Ashbery, Gilbert Grosvenor, Budd Schulberg, David Koch, David Childs, Robert Morgenthau, and Steve Brill, as well as various Rockefellers and countless lesser viscounts from the pages of the *Social Register*. Tuition for boarders is thirty-six thousand dollars a year. The school has six hundred or so students. In addition to academics, it stresses athletics and interaction with faculty, and is known for turning out well-mannered, obliging young men and women; independence and rebellion are not as integral to the culture as at some other schools.

"You'll notice that there are no signs indicating where anything is," Widmer said as he took me around. "Visitors have to ask where to go, which gives students an opportunity to be nice to them, so that word travels back to Greenwich about this wonderful place where the students have such nice manners." Although Widmer has introduced modifications to the Boyden way, he is an unabashed disciple; he has never sat down at Boyden's old desk, which occupies the entrance hall of the main school building. "That would be too presumptuous," Widmer said.

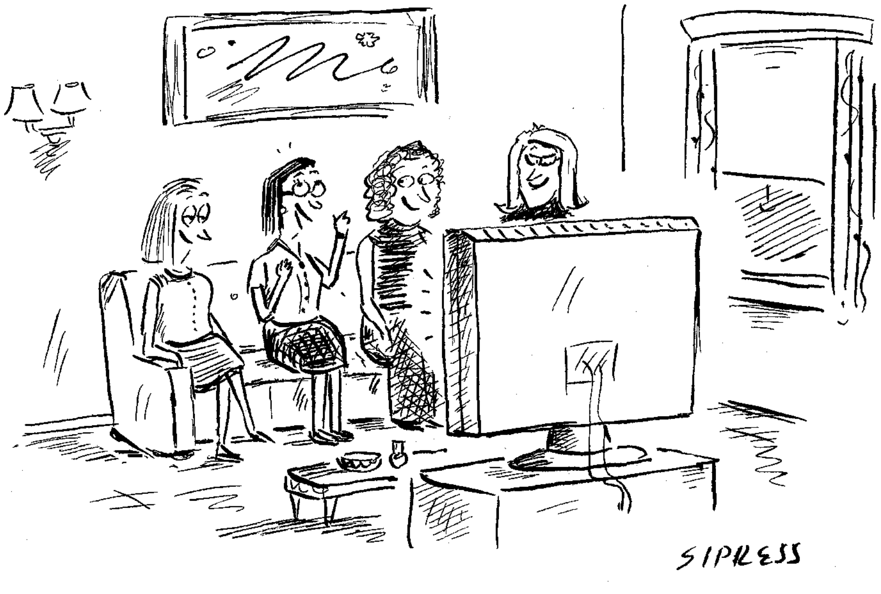
"At the new school, even though '2007' will be on the seal, we'd like to convey that there's a past to it, a history that's very important," Widmer said. "It won't look old, but it will feel like it's on historical ground. We will make use of the Deerfield narrative." He added, "This world gives the new school its content."

It was a sweet fall day, leaves skittering, the air crisp. Walking past students on the way to the dining hall—boys in baggy khakis or shorts, blazers, and ties, their hair turtled forward as if from weeks spent under lacrosse helmets; girls in bright sweaters and varsity windbreakers, not a nose ring or flash of goth to be seen—Widmer exhibited his knack for names, provoking demonstrations of fine manners. He told me later, "Sometimes I wonder if we're turning out a generation of freaks: well-dressed, well-mannered kids who can relate to people twice their age."

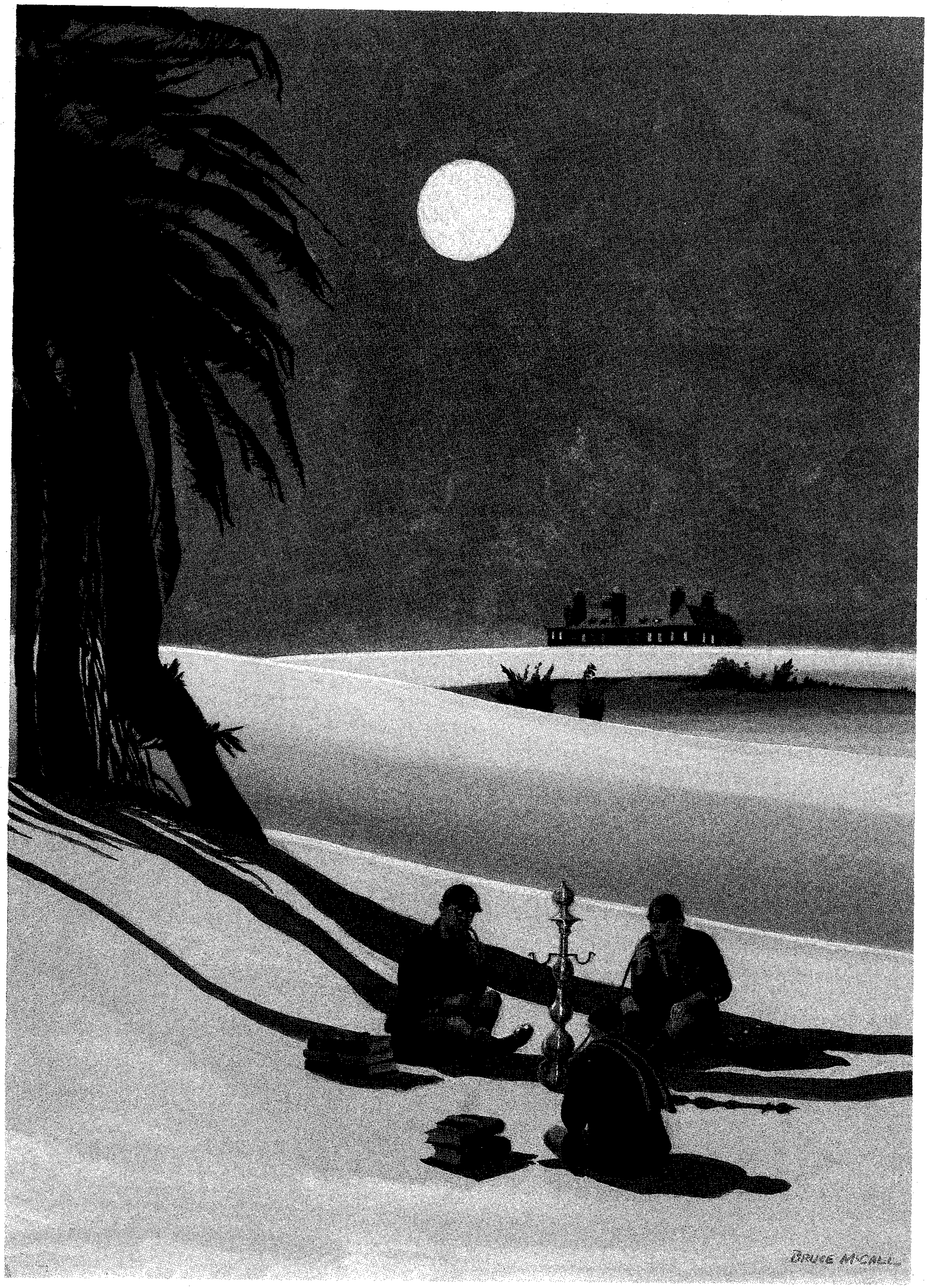
Widmer graduated from Deerfield in 1957 but has roots in the Middle East. He was born in Beirut, where his father taught at International College and his mother was a dean at American University. His great-grandfather founded Robert College, a secondary school in Istanbul. Widmer went to Williams and earned a doctorate in history and Far Eastern languages at Harvard. He spent twenty-five years on the faculty at Brown, fifteen of them as a dean. His wife, who was born in Madras and grew up in Los Angeles, is a professor of comparative literature and East Asian studies there. Widmer speaks six languages, but Arabic is not one of them, so last year he took an introductory course at Deerfield, flailing gamely at his *h'aas* and *ghayns*, alongside his teen-age charges. At commencement last year, each graduate gave him one Jordanian dinar.

A core ritual at Deerfield is the sit-down meal—a sort of assembly, chapel, and family dinner all in one that convenes eight times a week, for lunch or dinner. Eight or nine students are assigned to a faculty member's table in the dining hall for three weeks, before rotating to a new one. The tables are round. (When Abdullah was shown the first series of architectural renderings for his King's Academy, the dining hall had roughly the same dimensions as Deerfield's, but the plan called for rectangular tables. "This will not do," the King said. "These tables should be round. The tables at Deerfield are round.")

Lunch was brisk but civil. Widmer kicked off the conversation ("O.K., how's everybody?") and then let it flow and sputter. At Widmer's table, many states were represented, with a bias toward the Northeast. There were two African-American girls: one from New Orleans, who had lost her home to Katrina, and one from



"I love this reading group."



To succeed, the school will need to convince American families of its safety and Middle Eastern families of its rectitude.

Stowe, Vermont. Over dessert, Mr. Morsman, a Deerfield master for forty-six years, stood at a lectern and issued a few edicts and reminders—"The weather is changing. That doesn't mean the dress code is changing. I see a lot of people wearing fleece, and I see a lot of people avoiding me"—then m.c.'d a series of student announcements: the Outing Club, the Jujitsu Club, the debating team, the literary magazine, and, finally, the Etiquette Club, the mere mention of which prompted two long-haired young men at my table to roll their eyes. "That's it," Mr. Morsman said. Hundreds of chair legs moaned over the tiled floor, and the dining hall filled with exit chatter.

The boarding-school experience includes school, of course, so that afternoon I sat in on a couple of classes, half pretending (to myself) that I was a fourteen-year-old first-year boarder from the Emirates: how would the material speak to me? The curriculum at King's Academy will be essentially an American advanced-placement program, designed to prepare students for the best universities in the United States, but it must also meet the standards of Jordan's education ministry, which are rigid. In a sense, the students will be attending two high schools at once. English will be the language of instruction, and there will be the usual array of foreign languages, but students will be required to study Arabic, including classical Arabic. (As it happens, Abdullah is no master of classical Arabic, and, perhaps as a result, he is not the mellifluous orator his father was.) There will be an Islamic-theology requirement as well, which must be taught in Arabic, in addition to a world-religions course. Literature will be taught in English, but the students are more likely to encounter "Cities of Salt" than "A Separate Peace." As Viswanathan, who is in charge of designing the curriculum, told me, "You'll want the students to be familiar with Shakespeare, but also with Mahfouz and Rushdie."

My first stop was Ms. Hannay's English class, "50/50: Literature and Culture of the 1950s"—fifteen seniors seated around a table, discussing Cheever. The text was "The Country Husband," in which Francis Weed, a disaffected commuter in the fictitious Westchester town of Shady Hill, dreams of seducing the family babysitter. Ms. Hannay, in wide-wale corduroys and a lichen-green sweater, had the ardent, wry expression of a teacher who wants to lead her students toward a particular revelation but who is also tolerant of tangents. She began, "'The Country Husband' is about . . . ?"

"My parents," a boy said. Ms. Hannay raised her eyebrows.

"People you know," another said.

"I have a friend—it's his parents," a girl said.

Once the students had established that the story dealt rather squarely with their demographic, they began venturing narrative and thematic observations, and before long the conversation turned to the notion of the midlife crisis.

"Are any of you planning on having one?" Ms. Hannay asked.

"No."

"No."

"My friend's dad had one," a girl said. "He bought, like, synthesizers and a Euro van."

Over the next forty-five minutes, the class tackled débutante parties, conformity, and rebellion ("Is there anything shady about Shady Hill?"), and I suspected that Cheever, in all likelihood, would not be making the trip to Jordan.

But Machiavelli might be. The seniors in my next class—political philosophy, with Mr. O'Donnell—had read "The Prince"; with that uniquely adolescent blend of cynicism and naïveté, they engaged in a spirited discussion of the lion and the fox, and the morality of power. A quote from Lao-tzu was written on the blackboard: "Do you want to improve the world? I don't think it can be done." Without revealing any political bias, Mr. O'Donnell, a stocky and sardonic prep-school graduate (Brooks) with a ponytail and Blundstone boots, had them apply Machiavelli to the events of the day. For homework, they were to write a one-page letter from Machiavelli to President Bush.

"Double-spaced?" one boy asked.

"Can we throw a little Italian in there?" asked another.

Early that evening, I met with Widmer at the headmaster's house, a Colonial saltbox known as the Manse. Parts of it are more than three hundred years old, and Widmer can seem like a giant, stooping through its low-slung doorways into small, creaky rooms. The doors are never locked, and traffic can be brisk, especially with students seeking the counsel of Viswanathan, known to all as Ms. Vis. "Privacy is an illusion," Widmer said. "Our spaces belong to all of us." Widmer fixed a Martini, went into the library, and put his feet up on the coffee table. (Ms. Vis was in Providence.) "My big assignment next year will be to inculcate the idea of a boarding school in the Middle East," he said. "I have to assure American families of the safety of it. For an American, safety means not being blown up, but for a person in the region it may mean that certain traditional values are protected and genders are kept separate, and so forth." He added, "The hard part, of course, will be persuading parents in that part of the world to turn over their daughters to us." This fall, he and Viswanathan will begin travelling around the region, giving presentations at the best elementary schools. This summer, they also presided, with the assistance of several recent Deerfield graduates, over a Prep-for-Prep-like program in which fifty-two underprivileged but overachieving Jordanian public-school students spent two weeks at the King's Academy campus (which is still under construction) studying English and learning to use computers, to prepare them to compete with their more cosmopolitan and polylingual counterparts in the fall of 2007.

Widmer and I set off for dinner. He rode a mountain bike, swerving a bit, thanks to the pace, not the gin. At the dining hall, we loaded up our trays and joined a table of faculty members and their families. A teacher began talking about a course he was planning, on the literature of confession. One of the highlights, he said, would be "Lolita." That, too, probably wouldn't be making the trip.

The palace of His Majesty King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ('80), consists of a complex of buildings on a hill overlooking downtown Amman. I went to see him there last spring, passing through a series of checkpoints manned by unsmiling, mustachioed royal guards. I was driven to the royal offices, which resembled a low-slung Four Seasons hotel, and then was asked to wait in an anteroom. I would have felt like a troublemaker who had been summoned to see

"He rubbed your belly and it felt good—that doesn't make you gay."

• •

the headmaster—a familiar enough experience, and one that forever colors others like it—were it not for the fact that Circassian guards in traditional dress stood sentry, while a Bedouin attendant dropped by with coffee and bakhoor. Attendants of various rank and station dashed back and forth in the hallway leading to the King's chambers.

After a while, I was escorted down the hall and into a large office, where the King was waiting by the door. He is not a tall man, but sovereignty, footmen, shiny boots, and a good suit can give a man stature. Still, he was disarming and easygoing. We sat down, and he began speaking quickly, with a clipped, faintly British accent and an occasional blinking twitch: "It's called the Deerfield experience, and it's very hard to quantify—the way teachers are with you, the camaraderie, the way they allow you to mature, the values that they instill in you. I wanted to give other people that opportunity."

In Abdullah's view, the Deerfield experience could serve as a kind of foil in the so-called clash of civilizations. "I'm sure it's going to be a challenge for the first couple of students because of the tension in the area—as you know, Israeli students are going to be accepted into the school," he said. "But we need examples like this to show that, actually, we can all get along—and to build a younger generation who can take on the responsibilities of the world with a more open mind." He noted that fifty per cent of the population of the Middle East is under the age of eighteen. "If you look at Egypt or Saudi Arabia, and some of these other very large countries, they're a bit slower in trying to get education reform moving in the right direction. And it's going to impact very negatively on a young society."

Abdullah has four children—two boys (aged twelve and one) and two girls (nine and five). So far, he foresees his eldest, Hussein, going to King's Academy for a couple of years (he has the grades to get in), and then perhaps to Deerfield for two more, in part to protect him from the corrupting effects of his patrimony. "I don't want to see my kids leave the house until the last possible moment," he said, "but the more they go into the regular school system here in Jordan, the more they are going to be treated differently. It's just the way society is."

The King was attuned to the problem of snobbery. "I can cite a couple of secondary schools here in Jordan, one that is known as an extremely élite school, which I refuse to send my kids to, because every kid's got a mobile, and a BMW comes to pick him up after school. And we just don't want that."

Traditionally, Arab élites have sent their sons and daughters to the West for college and graduate school, but they have been reluctant to send them so far for secondary school. King's Academy would be a kind of way station on the road to the West, especially for girls. "With all the freedom a university has, it's a culture shock, and a lot of students lose their way," Abdullah said. "For people who are going to send their daughters to the States, wouldn't it be better for them to get acclimatized in a somewhat rigid high-school system, where you have that one-teacher-to-ten-student ratio, and you have ethics being put in place by a small community, a family community?" He went on, "I think initially it's going to be more conservative. I think it has to, because a lot of parents are going to say, 'O.K.—I'm sending my young daughter to a high school in Jordan that has boys in it?' Well, yeah. But you're going to have to do that sooner or later if you're thinking that your girls are going to go to the United States for college."

I asked him what kind of trouble he had got into during his time at Deerfield. "We always got into teen-age trouble, whatever kids do at that age," he said. "Let's put it this way: I never got into drugs as a young kid. Kids can be susceptible at that age, but everything at Deerfield was sports-oriented. We knew that the people who were doing that kind of stuff were the nerds, which was only five or ten per cent. Those were the A-plus students. The rest of us, everyone wanted to be on the top team. You want to be clean of body as well as clean of spirit, if that makes sense for a fourteen-year-old."

The protocol chief ducked in to end the interview, but Abdullah waved him away. He seemed to be enjoying himself. Like any prep-school guy with a sentimental streak he is susceptible to glory-days talk, but also it was an easier matter for him to address than Hezbollah or Hamas.

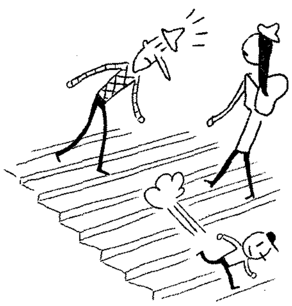
Abdullah holds a relatively moderate stance on Palestine (Jordan has a peace treaty with Israel) and has coöperated with the United States in the Iraq war (and, reportedly, in the rendition and interrogation of suspected Al Qaeda terrorists)—positions that have earned him enmity throughout the region. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian terrorist who was killed in Iraq in June, repeatedly called for his death. Jordan is an autocratic state, albeit a much gentler one than its neighbors to the north or south; criticizing the King is a crime, and journalists and academics go to jail for it. Even so, you hear complaints about rampant corruption and a political system where the people have no real power. As a State Department official told me, "The regime is really good at practicing the discourse of reform without enacting real reform." He added, "It's neither an Arabian police-state nightmare nor 'morning in Amman.' " Abdullah's particular blend of tolerant talk and grudging reform mollifies neither his radical critics nor his more enlightened ones.

Early in the conflict this summer between Israel and Hezbollah, Abdullah, moved both by moderate impulses and by wariness of "the Shia crescent" (Jordan is mostly Sunni), made statements implying that Hezbollah deserved a portion of the blame. As the bombing intensified, and the civilian casualties in Lebanon mounted—and with them outrage in the Arab world—Abdullah became openly critical of Israel. Abdullah declined to say anything himself about the conflict's effect on the school. Still, according to Widmer and a palace spokesperson, the war in Lebanon has not affected Abdullah's commitment to King's Academy, even if it has complicated the effort. "If anything, the school is more critically important now than ever," Widmer said.

Early in the planning for King's Academy, it became clear that you could no sooner duplicate Deerfield in the desert than you could Jerusalem in New Jersey. There are no maple trees in Jordan, to say nothing of Rockefellers or Choates. What's more, the village of Deerfield, into which the school spills without fences or gates, is one of the older settlements in the country: the school grew up over time among three-hundred-year-old clapboard houses. In Jordan, a rough equivalent would be a boarding school set in the caves and tombs of Petra. In Dubai, perhaps, you could imagine an emir buying up a colonial village and having it reassembled under an air-conditioned dome: a preppy Potemkin. But in Jordan the academy's planners will try to approximate Deerfield rather than replicate it. The question is to what extent the New England boarding-school experience depends on such components as field-hockey skirts, rotting apples, townies, quarries, blackflies, and booze runs to Boston.

In the summer of 2002, King Abdullah invited a Deerfield contingent, including Widmer, Viswanathan, and its director of development, David Pond, to Jordan to talk about the school. Among the guests was a Jordanian expatriate named Safwan Masri, a vice-dean at Columbia Business School. One morning, they took off in a helicopter, with the King at the controls, and scoped out potential sites. When they stopped for lunch, Abdullah announced that Masri was his point person on the school. This was news to Masri, but, as he told me recently, "when the King asks you to do something, you do it." Masri eventually became chairman of the board. (Last December, he stepped down as vice-dean at Columbia—though he'll continue to teach—in order to devote himself to King's Academy.)

Masri did not go to Deerfield. His father was a Palestinian, from Nablus, on the West Bank, who attended boarding school in Jerusalem in the thirties (and had a Jewish roommate). Business took him to Amman, where Safwan was born. At the age of sixteen, Masri went to America to study engineering at Purdue. He stayed on in the States, collecting degrees, including a doctorate in engineering from Stanford, which allowed him to avoid military service in Jordan. (His mother successfully lobbied the Jordanian parliament to have the military-service laws changed so that young men pursuing their doctorates abroad could postpone their service.) Eventually, he wound up at Columbia. One of the people he got to know in New York was Rania, the future Queen, whose brother was pursuing a master's in public affairs at Columbia. After she and Abdullah took the throne, Masri became her unpaid adviser.



One of the first things Masri did, after being enlisted by the King, was solicit advice from Henry Kravis, who is on the board of Columbia Business School. Kravis urged him to raise money first in the Middle East. The King put up seven million dollars, as well as the land, and attracted money from young princes in the region, such as Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, and Sheikh Salman Bin Hamad al-Khalifa, the crown prince of Bahrain. Various Arab and Gulf banks contributed, as did civilians like the Saudi investor Ghassan Shaker and the Jordanian bankers Isam and Rajai Salfiti. The political pitch (imagine a wellspring of moderate, secular, worldly young Arab men and women) was gilded by a gearhead pitch (the campus will be a technological marvel). The first American whom Masri solicited was Peter Weinberg, a former Goldman Sachs partner and a Deerfield trustee, who gave two million dollars, through his family's foundations. Weinberg led Masri to the private-equity investor and former Harvard oarsman Dick Cashin, who has been involved in the Boys' Club of New York and the American University of Cairo. Cashin and his wife gave a million dollars. The goal is a hundred million dollars by 2008. So far, about sixty million has been raised.

In the fall of 2002, Masri went to Massachusetts with the King's architect, a London-based Egyptian named Khaled Azzam, who designed Abdullah's private residence and a huge new state mosque. Azzam and Masri spent two days at Deerfield, observing the layout of the buildings, the behavior of the students, and the correlation between the two—the way, for example, students and faculty spilled onto the pathways, in the five minutes between classes, and engaged in conversation and horseplay. Azzam, who had built four well-fortified schools in Saudi Arabia, had never seen one that fit so effortlessly into its natural environment. "He took in the open spaces, the way the land and the buildings and the people interacted," Masri said. "And he transported it to this kind of environment." Azzam even thought of little nooks where students might go to sneak cigarettes. On Christmas Day, 2003, Masri met Abdullah at the King's mother's palace, in Amman, and they drove to a hundred-and-forty-acre plot of land that the King had been buying up, on the outskirts of the ancient city of Madaba, about a half hour south of Amman. The terrain was lush, by Jordanian standards, but to Pioneer Valley eyes it might still qualify as desert. Not far to the west was Mt. Nebo, where Moses is said to have died, after looking down from the mountaintop over the Jordan Valley: his first and final glimpse of the Promised Land.

PATERSON

What do I want in these rooms papered with visions of money?
How much can I make by cutting my hair? If I put new heels on my shoes,
bathe my body reeking of masturbation and sweat, layer upon layer of excrement
dried in employment bureaus, magazine hallways, statistical cubicles, factory stairways,
cloakrooms of the smiling gods of psychiatry;
if in antechambers I face the presumption of department store supervisory employees,
old clerks in their asylums of fat, the slobs and dumbbells of the ego,
with money and power to hire and fire and make and break and fart and justify their reality
of wrath and rumor of wrath to wrath-weary man,
what war I enter and for what a prize! the dead prick of commonplace obsession,
harridan vision of electricity at night and daylight misery of thumb sucking rage.

I would rather go mad, gone down the dark road to Mexico, heroin dripping in my veins, eyes and ears full of marijuana,
eating the God peyote on the floor of a mud hut on the border

During Deerfield's spring break, I spent a week in Amman with Widmer, Viswanathan, and Masri. Viswanathan is spirited and congenial; her ability to maintain a cheerful air and fervent intellect, in the face of ceaseless social and professional obligations, suggests an aptitude for higher office. On formal occasions, she wears a sari. Where her husband is droll, she is keen. Although she will serve as the first lady, of sorts, at King's Academy, she will also occupy its Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa Distinguished Chair in the Theory and Practice of Knowledge while on extended leave from Brown.

The road to King's Academy cuts west from Jordan's main artery, the Desert Highway, into the hills east of the Dead Sea, passing wheat fields, greenhouses, carrot venders, and signs advertising condominium developments. (Amman has been enjoying a growth spurt, owing, in large part, to an influx of middle-class Iraqis, who have fled the violence in their country. Private and government contractors have also been using Amman as a base of operations in the Iraq war.) The first thing you see of the school is the concrete wall around it. Eventually, vines and shrubbery will serve as camouflage, but for now the wall is a stark sight; it brings to mind a medium-security prison. At one point during our visit, Masri asked Gabi Gildeh, one of the project managers, "How high is the wall?"

"Two and a half metres," Gildeh said.

"Impossible to jump over?"

"For students, nothing is impossible."

"I'm not worried about the students," Masri said. "I'm worried about trespassers." Cameras along the perimeter will point out, not in. "The presence of security cameras would kill school spirit," Widmer said. "We don't want to give students the impression that we're spying on them."

The campus, still unfinished, was a scene of extravagance and desolation. It resembled an abandoned capital city—Celesteville, minus the elephants and the palms. The architectural style is Mediterranean: terra-cotta roofs and bleached limestone outer walls, with giant pine beams, more like Stanford than like Deerfield. There were nearly two dozen buildings, many of them as large and grand as an individual school. Between them were vast tracts of baked dusty earth, traversed by a windswept network of stone pathways. The only inhabitants were six hundred Turkish construction workers, who spent their nights in trailers down by the gymnasium. By day, they crawled about, hard-hatless, in the rafters of the buildings, as they raced to finish the interiors. They had built nearly everything in twenty months, at times outpacing the board's ability to raise funds. (Construction is budgeted at sixty-two million dollars.)

The campus is on a slight incline, with the classroom building at the crest and the sports facilities at the base—swimming pool; soccer stadium; squash, handball, tennis, and basketball courts; and thirteen acres of playing fields. In between are the dining hall, a seven-hundred-seat theatre, the library (fifty thousand volumes), the student center (future home of the school radio station and newspaper), the headmaster's house, a guesthouse, the administration building, and a fleet of dormitories. "These are the dorms His Majesty requested," Gildeh said. They were two stories high, each floor consisting of a long hallway with a dozen rooms on each side and a faculty apartment at the end.

One of the boys' dorms had been set up as a showcase. (Donors who give between one and six million dollars can have a dorm named after them.) Our delegation shuffled in. The stairway was grand, the hallways broad, the rooms spotless but snug, all of them singles opening onto a communal balcony that ran the length of the building—an unthinkable luxury, by Yankee standards. One of the rooms was fully furnished, with standard-issue wood-composite furniture from Turkey and some schoolboy props: a basketball, a poster of a 1932 Plymouth sedan, a shelf loaded with calculus textbooks and fiction by Nicholas Griffin. On the desk, a biology textbook lay open to a chapter on organ transplants.

Despite the speed at which the project had come together, every detail had called for deliberation, and, of course, meetings,

or laying in a hotel room over the body of some suffering man or woman,
rather jar my body down the road, crying by a diner in the western sun;
rather crawl on my naked belly over the tincans of Cincinnati;
rather drag a rotten railroad tie to a Golgotha in the Rockies;
rather, crowned with thorns in Galveston, nailed hand and foot in Los
  Angeles, raised up to die in Denver,
pierced in the side in Chicago, perished and tombed in New Orleans and
  resurrected in 1958 somewhere on Garret Mountain,
come down roaring in a blaze of hot cars and garbage,
streetcorner Evangel in front of City Hall, surrounded by statues of
  agonized lions,
with a mouthful of shit, and the hair rising on my scalp,
screaming and dancing in praise of eternity annihilating the sidewalk,
  annihilating reality,
screaming and dancing against the orchestra in the destructible ballroom
  of the world,
blood streaming from my belly and shoulders
flooding the city with its hideous ecstasy rolling over the pavements and
  highways
by the bayou and forests and derricks leaving my flesh and my bones
  hanging on the trees.

—*Allen Ginsberg*

on several continents. Masri and the board had presented the King with a list of a dozen possibilities for the name of the school, among them Madaba Academy, Royal Academy, and Hashemite Academy. The King had checked off the last one, but there were reservations about it, because it identified the school too closely with Jordan, the monarchy, and the Prophet Muhammad. The board thought of King's Academy, which had a pleasing Cantabrigian resonance, and it stuck. The board hired graphic designers and consultants from Istanbul to devise school colors, and, after several months, they came up with light green and light brown—Deerfield green with a desert tint. Everyone was pleased except the King, who said, "I don't like them." He chose red, blue, and gold. The dress code will be stricter than Deerfield's: blue blazers (with the school crest), tan pants (tan skirts for girls), and white shirts. The boys will wear ties. Viswanathan's solution to the head-scarf question for girls was to introduce a mandatory school scarf, which girls may use to cover their heads.

Viswanathan and Widmer were eager to see the house where they'd be living for the next several years. It stood, unguarded and incomplete, in a plaza between the administrative building and the dining hall. The injunction against privacy had been heeded, but, with doors of steel and glass, limestone walls, and an open plan inside, it had little in common with the Manse. For some reason, there was a pile of toilets in the future living room. The house had no back door, which troubled Viswanathan, because if she and Widmer were entertaining guests and a student came seeking her counsel, as often happens at Deerfield, the student would have to muster the courage to barge in, rather than slipping unseen into a homey kitchen. (Widmer later arranged for side and rear entrances to be added.)

Down at the nursery, at the far end of the campus, a crew of Turks was unloading six shipping containers full of Italian jacaranda trees, which had been trucked in that afternoon from Aqaba. There were also hundreds of olive trees, Lebanon cedars, acacias, and oleanders. "When the school opens, there will be a sense of verdure," Viswanathan said. Azzam, the architect, had told me that he intends to grow an olive forest inside the walls. A boarding school without woods is no boarding school at all.

The sun was setting near Mt. Nebo. Some Turks had struck up a game of soccer near their trailer park. On the way out, we stopped at the spiritual center—the smallest structure on campus. There had been talk of a mosque, but the King insisted that the school be nonsectarian. The spiritual center at King's Academy consists of a small cloistered garden, with a fountain in the middle and benches along the side. Viswanathan wondered whether there shouldn't be a place—at the fountain, or perhaps a faucet along the wall—for Muslims to wash before prayer. Gildeh and Masri thought not. "It is not a mosque," Gildeh said.

That night, Masri hosted a dinner party at his apartment—a modern duplex in the Deir Ghbar section of Amman. He had spent the afternoon rounding up gin, vermouth, Martini glasses, and olives for Widmer, a task that, thanks, perhaps, to the British Mandate, had proved far from impossible. After the Jordanian guests—among them a newspaper editor, a senator, and two women from the royal court—had left, Widmer began to talk about a different kind of challenge: the comportment of some wealthy Jordanian adolescents. A few he'd met at an élite local high school that morning had struck him as apathetic and ill-mannered. Widmer said, "Let me tell you this: if we can't stem that tide, we will have failed."

"The issue isn't just with the children," Masri said. "It's with the parents."

"Especially if the parents are used to their kids being sassy," Widmer said. "It will be an interesting dynamic, to say the least. Maybe we should put that on the application to King's Academy: 'How spoiled are you?' "

While I was in Jordan, Widmer, Viswanathan, and Masri organized a conference, inviting two dozen educators from prep schools in and around the region, as well as a few from the United States, to introduce themselves to their peers and rivals, and to solicit ideas and opinions about how to make King's Academy work. There were representatives from the local private schools, and from some venerable boarding schools, including Robert College. One morning, a bus took everyone down to Madaba to see the campus, and the group shuffled along the pathways, like mothers inspecting the mansions of super-rich new sons-in-law.

"Wow."

"Wait till you see the wow inside."

"You're treating them very well. Very well."

"Six hundred kids. Jesus. I've got twenty-six hundred kids in a space the tenth of this."

For three days, Widmer, Viswanathan, and Masri held talks and roundtable discussions. "One big difference between us and you is that we don't have students yet," Widmer said in his introductory remarks.

"We're not going to be approaching your teachers," Masri said, when his turn came. (By August, they had recruited a dozen faculty members, from schools in America and in the region.)

Other participants asked questions and offered advice. The headmistress of Qatar Academy, a coed boarding school in Education City, outside Doha, remarked that people in the region tend to think that boarding school is only for "broken families or families with a Hollywood style of living, where the parents are too busy to take care of their children." She had forty-two boarders at Qatar Academy, and, she said, "We get forty-two calls a day. Jordan is not Qatar, but similar. God help you."

On May 28th, Widmer presided over his last Deerfield commencement. An hour before the ceremony, he, Viswanathan, and Masri joined a fleet of black S.U.V.s and pickup trucks and an array of security men on the sideline of a lacrosse field. The day was hot and clear, and the air smelled of mud. After a while, three helicopters appeared, flying north in a line. They flew past the school, and then reappeared, coursing south over the campus, on a trajectory similar to the one that Abdullah's flare had taken, a quarter century before. The helicopters landed, one at a time, and out of the last stepped Abdullah and Faux, to applause from well-wishers congregated along the edges of the field. Widmer, Viswanathan, and Masri greeted them, then joined a convoy up to the Manse. Children waved little Jordanian flags.

The King was the commencement speaker. When Widmer had mentioned this possibility to the seniors, earlier in the school year, the class president had pushed instead for his uncle Steve Carell, the star of "The Forty-Year-Old Virgin." "Carell turned out to be unavailable," Widmer explained. "So we were left with His Majesty, which was our wish all along."

Still, it was unlikely that Carell would have required as much security. Various forces—U.S. Secret Service, Jordanian security, and the state and local police—had mustered forty men. Abdullah and Widmer took part in a procession down the road that cuts through campus, a ritual that Widmer introduced some years ago. Accompanied by bagpipers, the underclassmen marched past, boys in blazers and white shirts and pants, girls in white dresses. "I don't think we did this," the King said. He had originally opposed the idea of coeducation at Deerfield but had warmed to it after talking to some of his old teachers. I asked him about Stoneleigh-Burnham, and he said, with a smile, "Is that place still going?" It was.

An older woman, catching sight of Abdullah, motioned with a crook of her finger for him to come over, and he obeyed. "Must be an old teacher," Masri said under his breath. "Only an old teacher can get away with doing that to the King."

"That was my French teacher," the King said, after she released him. "She always used to give me a hard time."

A fife-and-drum outfit, in Colonial costume, stepped forward and led students, faculty, headmaster, and King into a large green-and-white tent. The King's security men nudged students out of the way to improve sight lines. "I'm picking up ideas for the graduation at King's Academy," Masri said, as he took his seat. "The bagpipes would work, but not the fife and drum." The night before, Masri had attended a traditional gathering of the graduating class with Widmer and Ms. Vis, a session known as "the senior cry," during which the students talk about their time at Deerfield. "I was overwhelmed by the culture and the feeling," Masri said. The spirit, as well as the ritualized expression of it, was something he thought worth emulating. "If we can do that, the rest will be easy."

The graduation ceremony was unremarkable (school song, senior speeches, partisan cheering sections), and the King's speech was fairly ordinary (knowledge is the best kind of wealth, your brain cannot overfill, we still remember Norm in the stockroom). The graduates made Widmer and Viswanathan honorary members of their class, and Widmer conferred a Deerfield diploma on Abdullah's half brother Ali, who had come along on the trip. Prince Ali had spent two years at Deerfield in the early nineties, at the time of the first Gulf War, but it was decided that he would be better off elsewhere. He finished up at Salisbury, a less prestigious boarding school, in Connecticut.

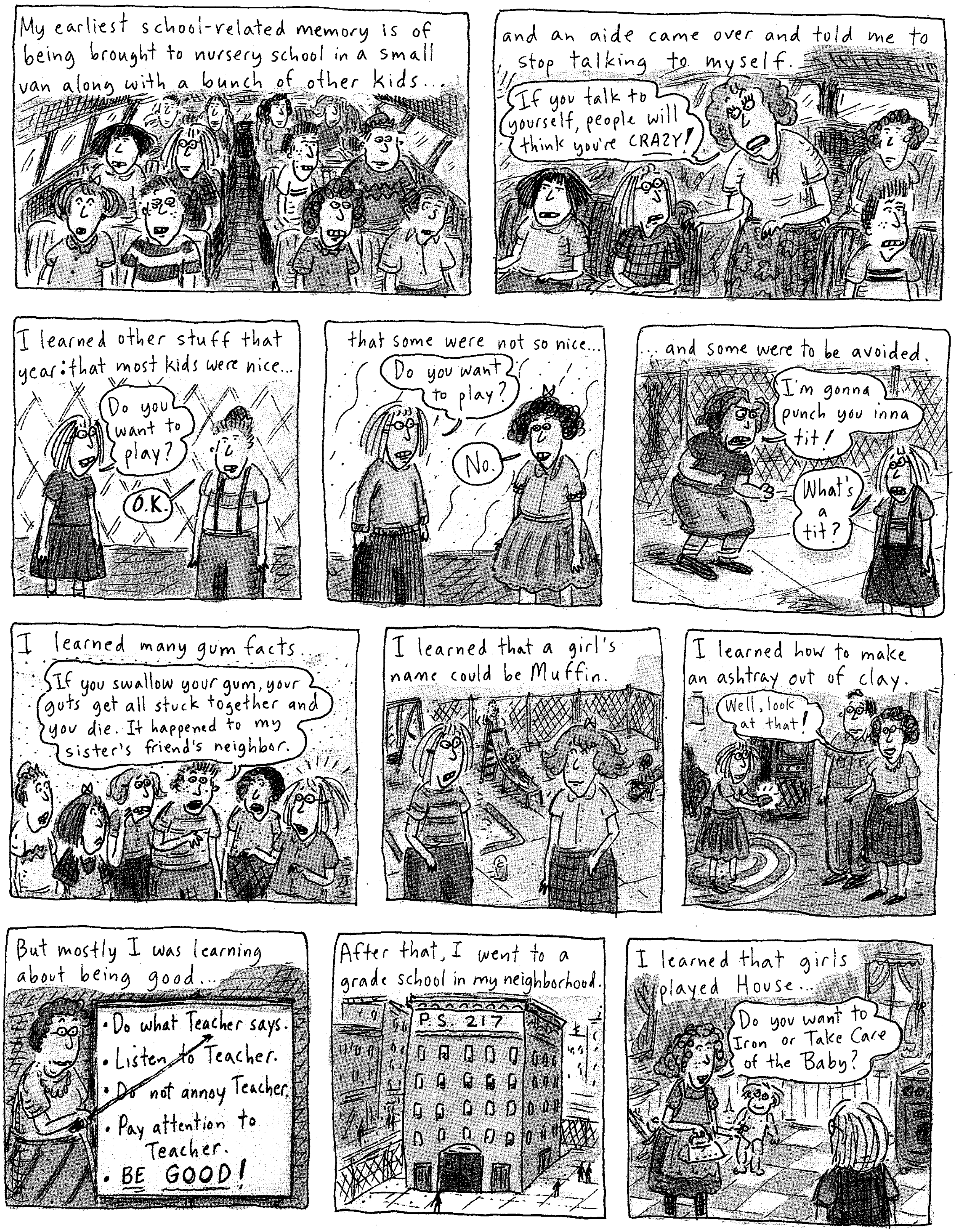
Afterward, the class of 1980 had a luncheon under a tent at the Manse. Forty-five classmates had come, some with their wives, and they all gravitated to the King, who had changed out of his jacket and tie into a black polo shirt. The class has contributed a million dollars to King's Academy. Abdullah, at their reunion last year (everyone wore green-and-white Hawaiian shirts), had said offhandedly to Faux that they should all come to see King's Academy; a few weeks later, he learned that a hundred classmates had signed up for a trip. He arranged an itinerary for them, and they travelled by bus all over Jordan—a big lunch at the academy, a night on the Dead Sea, a banquet inside the canyons of Little Petra. Abdullah joined them for a few hours in Wadi Rum, a desert in the south, and later, while some of them were swimming in the Red Sea, at Aqaba, a helicopter swooped in and hovered for a minute overhead, blinding them in a mini-typhoon of salt water. They found out later that, as they'd suspected, the pilot was Ab.

Widmer stood up during lunch and mentioned that Abdullah had met the previous evening with President Bush and that that afternoon he was flying to Wyoming to have dinner with Dick Cheney, who several months before had accidentally shot a hunting companion. A murmur of jocular disapproval passed through the crowd. Widmer then presented the King with a gift: an 1815 New England officer's rifle, in a glass-and-wood case. The King took it and said, "So, I guess I *am* prepared for my meeting tonight." Then he began reminiscing about the class's trip to Jordan. "I didn't think Phil could get in any more trouble until I saw pictures—"

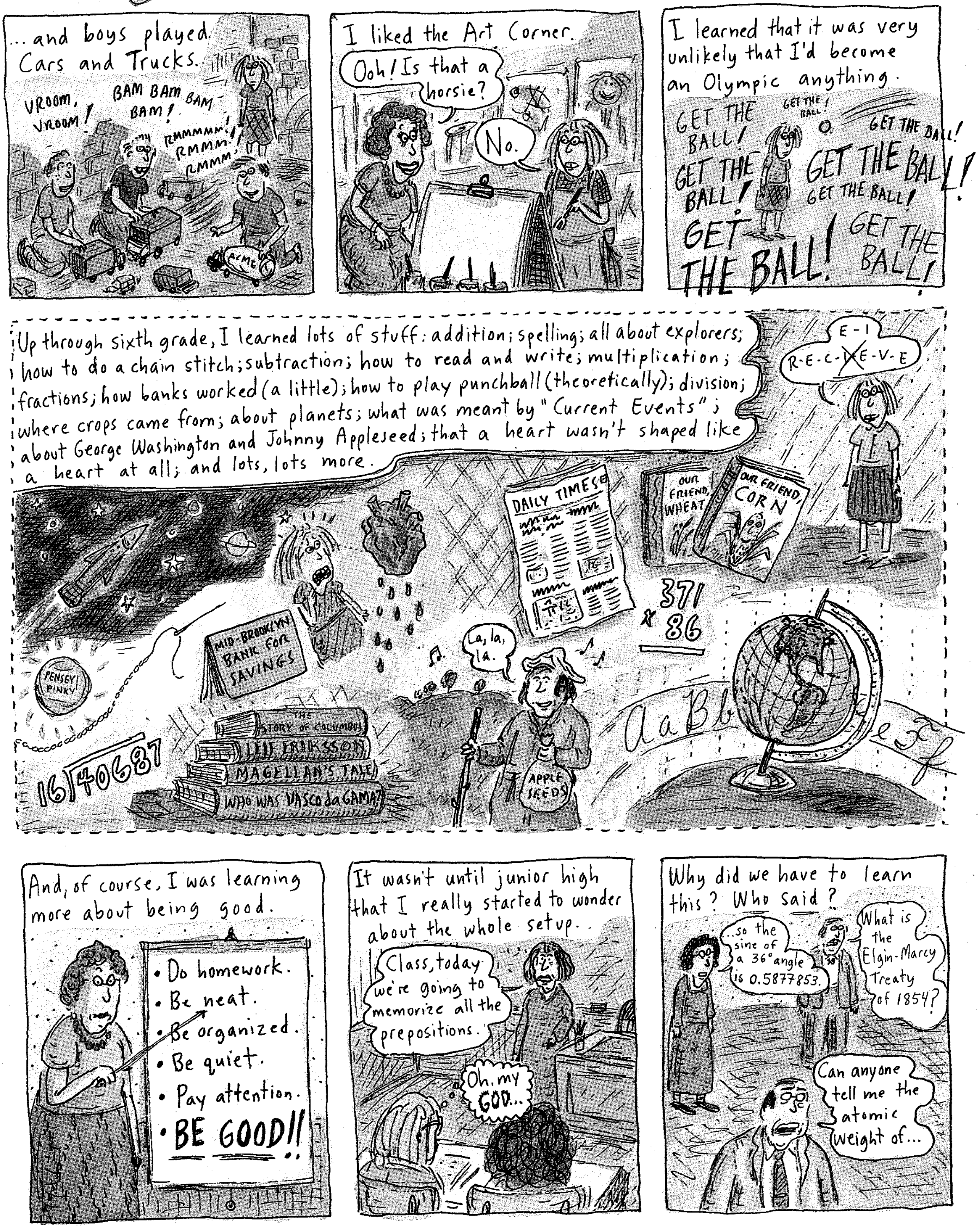
"A video!" someone called out.

"—a video of him wearing women's clothing at the bar!" When the King was done with his speech, Prince Ali slipped out of the tent for a cigarette. ♦

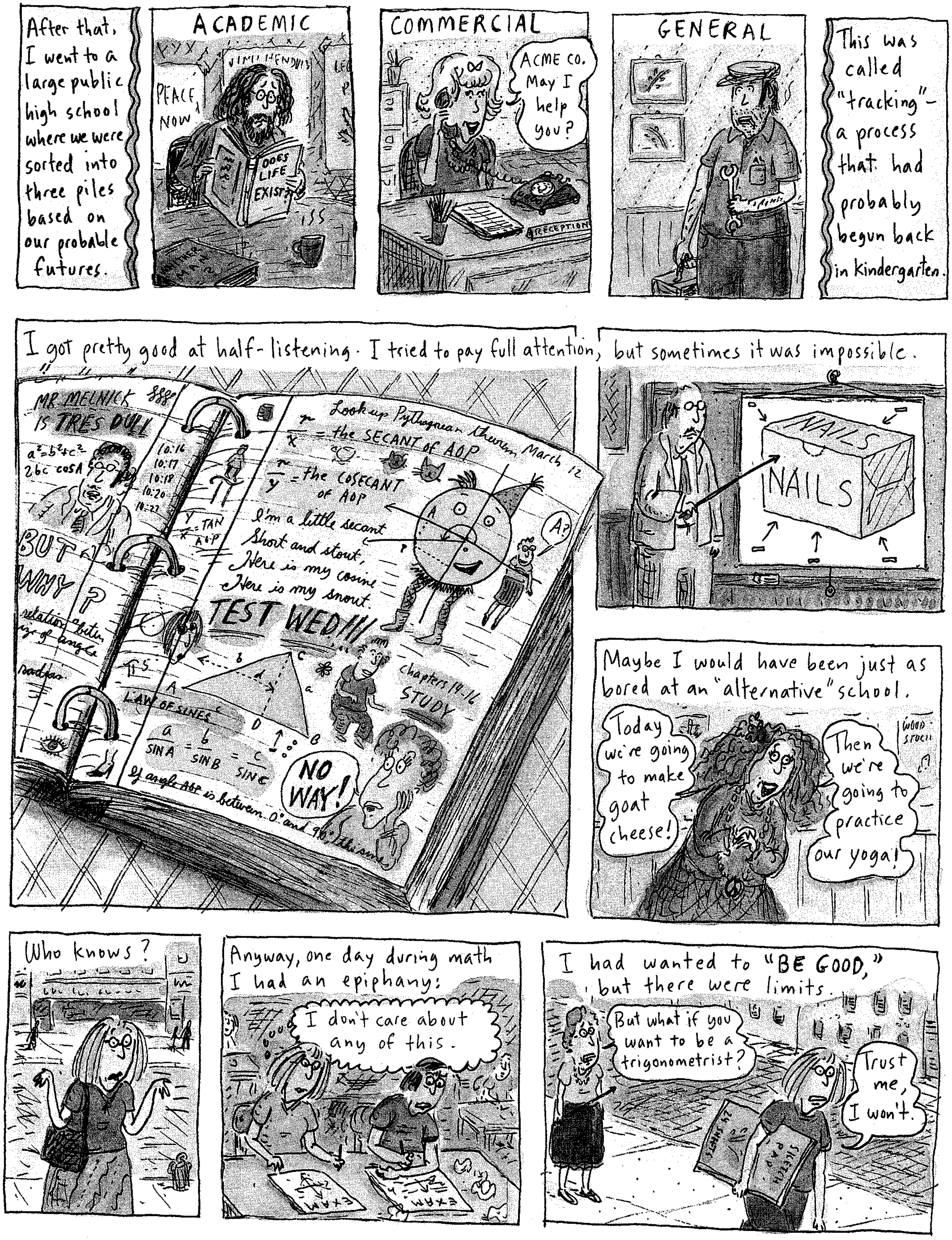
WHAT I LEARNED:


My earliest school-related memory is of being brought to nursery school in a small van along with a bunch of other kids...
and an aide came over and told me to stop talking to myself.
If you talk to yourself, people will think you're CRAZY!
I learned other stuff that year: that most kids were nice...
Do you want to play?
O.K.
that some were not so nice...
Do you want to play?
No.
...and some were to be avoided.
I'm gonna punch you inna tit!
What's a tit?
I learned many gum facts...
If you swallow your gum, your guts get all stuck together and you die. It happened to my sister's friend's neighbor.
I learned that a girl's name could be Muffin.
I learned how to make an ashtray out of clay.
Well, look at that!
But mostly I was learning about being good...
• Do what Teacher says.
• Listen to Teacher.
• Do not annoy Teacher.
• Pay attention to Teacher.
• BE GOOD!
After that, I went to a grade school in my neighborhood.
P.S. 217
I learned that girls played House...
Do you want to Iron or Take Care of the Baby?

A Sentimental Education


...and boys played Cars and Trucks.
VROOM, VROOM!
BAM BAM BAM BAM!
RMMMMM! RMMM! RMMM!
ACME
I liked the Art Corner.
Ooh! Is that a horsie?
No.
I learned that it was very unlikely that I'd become an Olympic anything.
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
GET THE BALL!
Up through sixth grade, I learned lots of stuff: addition; spelling; all about explorers; how to do a chain stitch; subtraction; how to read and write; multiplication; fractions; how banks worked (a little); how to play punchball (theoretically); division; where crops came from; about planets; what was meant by "Current Events"; about George Washington and Johnny Appleseed; that a heart wasn't shaped like a heart at all; and lots, lots more.
E-I
R-E-C-~~I~~E-V-E
DAILY TIMES
OUR FRIEND, WHEAT
OUR FRIEND, CORN
371
x 86
MID-BROOKLYN BANK FOR SAVINGS
PENSEY PINKY
La, la, la.
THE STORY OF COLUMBUS
LEIF ERIKSSON
MAGELLAN'S TALE
WHO WAS VASCO da GAMA?
APPLE SEEDS
16)40687
Aa Bb
e Ff
And, of course, I was learning more about being good.
• Do homework.
• Be neat.
• Be organized.
• Be quiet.
• Pay attention.
• BE GOOD!!
It wasn't until junior high that I really started to wonder about the whole setup.
Class, today we're going to memorize all the prepositions.
Oh, my GOD...
Why did we have to learn this? Who said?
...so the sine of a 36° angle is 0.5877853.
What is the Elgin-Marcy Treaty of 1854?
Can anyone tell me the atomic weight of...

FROM NURSERY SCHOOL THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE


After that, I went to a large public high school where we were sorted into three piles based on our probable futures.
ACADEMIC
JIMI HENDRIX
PEACE NOW
DOES LIFE EXIST?
COMMERCIAL
ACME Co. May I help you?
RECEPTION
GENERAL
This was called "tracking"—a process that had probably begun back in kindergarten.
I got pretty good at half-listening. I tried to pay full attention, but sometimes it was impossible.
MR MELNICK IS TRES DULL
$a^2=b^2+c^2$
2bc cosA
10:16
10:17
10:18
10:20
10:22
BUT WHY?
relation betw. size of angle
radian
Y/X = TAN AOP
Look up Pythagorean theorem March 12
r/x = the SECANT of AOP
r/y = the COSECANT of AOP
I'm a little secant
Short and stout,
Here is my cosine
Here is my snout.
A?
TEST WED!!!
LAW OF SINES
a/SIN A = b/SIN B = c/SIN C
chapters 14-16 STUDY
NO WAY!
If ~~angle AOP~~ is between 0° and 90°, the same
NAILS
NAILS
Maybe I would have been just as bored at an "alternative" school.
Today we're going to make goat cheese!
Then we're going to practice our yoga!
WOOD STOCK
Who knows?
Anyway, one day during math I had an epiphany:
I don't care about any of this.
EXAM
EXAM
I had wanted to "BE GOOD," but there were limits.
But what if you want to be a trigonometrist?
Trust me, I won't.
12th GRADE MATH

FICTION

KANSAS

BY ANTONYA NELSON

The girls left early, the two-year-old being driven to Montessori by her seventeen-year-old cousin. Three of their four parents lay in bed hungover; the fourth had risen unsteadily to fix breakfast, nauseated by her new pregnancy. Standing dazed at the stove, Anna had felt grateful to her niece, Kay-Kay, for her morning cheer, her willingness to dress little Cherry Sue, settle her in at the table, wash her face and hands—one of them bound in a bright-green cast—and then carry her off to school. Cherry Sue had been singing about babies, waving her bandaged fist like a maraca. She sang about everything these days, gesturing wildly, as if her life were a musical.

"Don't forget her plug," Anna told Kay-Kay, meaning the pacifier.

"*My plug, my plug,*" Cherry Sue chorused.

Anna was in despair about her second pregnancy, and furious with her husband, Ian, for having announced it to everyone. Now she had no choice. In her daughter's songs the new baby already had a name—'No White or Toto—and everyone at Montessori had congratulated Anna. She was still exhausted from having Cherry Sue, who had only this month finally been weaned—by force. Just when Anna had thought she might actually repossess her body, here she was a hostage again. In more ways than one. Having another child with Ian meant that she was further delayed in leaving him. If it weren't for Cherry Sue, she and her husband would have gone their separate ways years ago, but now their fates seemed impossibly knotted. He refused to use condoms, and he failed to withdraw because he *wanted* her pregnant; the baby was a weapon that he could plant like a bomb. Cherry Sue loved him, and so would the new child; children didn't know any better. He was like the Devil, Anna thought: somebody who kept his deceits hidden until it was too late, until you were already implicated in them.

"Bye, Aunt Anna," Kay-Kay said, with Cherry Sue hoisted on her hip, riding her cousin like a horse. Anna sniffed sentimentally. The girls were the only two people in the house who got along a hundred per cent of the time. Often mistaken for sisters (even, alarmingly, for mother and daughter), they were both fair and freckled, light-eyed, and plump in a healthy way.

"Bye-bye, Mama," Cherry Sue sang out. "Don't cry, Mama."

"Don't cry," Kay-Kay joined in, smiling brightly. Four years ago, her adolescence had descended on the household like a lit match in a powder keg. Now the disaster had passed. Gone were the frightening clothes, the angry music, the Sharpie-marker makeup. Restored was the pretty child who bathed every day and made conversation with her family.

"Goodbye," Anna said, sighing and waving at the girls.

It was a sunny day in Wichita, the birds were pouring their hearts out in trees just beginning to bud, and Anna fell asleep in the back-yard hammock, waking later with a sunburn, the skin on the backs of her thighs imprinted with hemp netting like a rump roast.

The family cell-phone plan had seven subscribers, their numbers each one digit apart. Kay-Kay's was the easiest to remember, 246-2460, and she was the one most frequently called.

Her father, Henry, often forgot to turn on his phone or to charge it; he left it places—restaurants or jacket pockets. (Cherry Sue carried around one of his phones that had gone through the wash.) Henry was the oldest parent in the house, fifty-eight, a psychiatrist, a mild man who let life happen to him, let the people he loved talk him into things—like cell phones or children or trampolines. This was his third marriage, and his wife, Emily, Anna's sister, was a generation younger than he. He kept marrying women in their twenties, having a daughter with them, then divorcing. Probably this would be his last marriage and daughter; he'd stayed in this one the longest, seeing Kay-Kay into puberty and beyond. The other girls he'd left when they were still in grade school, two half sisters whom Kay-Kay barely knew. One had married a cop. The other was a lesbian whose lover had been a patient of her father's. Wichita was just that size, big enough for lesbians and psychoanalysis, small enough for impractical, coincidental cross-pollination.

Anna and Emily's mother—known to everyone in the family as Nana—remembered to carry her cell phone with her, but she often mistook it for other objects: the TV remote, a radio, her glasses case. Nana lived across town in a condo that she left only on Tuesdays, when she made her "rounds": hairdresser, physician, bridge club, grocery. Occasionally, Kay-Kay stayed over at her grandmother's. That had been one of her dodges, during the time of trouble—saying that she was with Nana when she was simply at large. She had also thrown parties at Nana's condo, Tuesday-afternoon blowouts, where she shared with her friends the old woman's pharmaceuticals and liquor. Some late nights she had sneaked off with Nana's car. For Christmas this year, however, Kay-Kay had embroidered a set of pillowcases for her grandmother, with bluebells and daisies, sheep and a shepherdess, and "I Love Nana" in rose-colored thread. The rest of the family was still taking in this revised self, this hellion turned hausfrau.

Emily and Anna had programmed into their cell phones the identical ringtone for Kay-Kay's calls, an assaulting electronic jangle that ended on a sour interrogative. Recently they had discussed changing it, since it no longer seemed to suit Kay-Kay. She had become someone more dulcet, they said. They had yet to settle on a new Kay-Kay ringtone, though they were reminded of the need every time the girl called, setting off that noise that never failed to startle.

Ian's phone had a lock on its functions. Because he violated others' privacy, he assumed that they would violate his. He had his phone in his possession at all hours, clasped in his palm like a gun. It was set to vibrate so that he alone would know when he'd been summoned. When Kay-Kay had stolen his cocaine stash, Ian had been frustratingly unable to report the theft to anyone but his wife. In debt himself—to Anna and her family, to his boss, to all his friends—he'd felt especially outraged. He was owed, by somebody: an apology, a sum of money, carte blanche.

The seventh phone belonged to Kay-Kay's ex-boyfriend Wesley. For two years Wesley had lived in the house, eighteen when he moved in, yet not in any way an adult; Kay-Kay, only fifteen back then, had seemed more mature. Wesley's parents were divorced, living in different states; he had no real home of his own, no address or phone num-

DETAIL: MARY ELLEN MARK, "TINY" (1983)

ber. Including him on the family plan cost an extra $9.99 a month: nothing, really. Henry paid the bills without giving them much thought. He was generous by nature. And, as a therapist, he made a lot of money, his life financed by other people's troubles. Why shouldn't he contribute to the welfare of his daughter's boyfriend? When Wesley had needed a root canal, it was Emily who made the appointment. The family had coached him on his A.C.T.s, and he still stopped by to consult about perplexing pieces of the grownup world—student loans or car insurance. He was a working boy who had loved Kay-Kay dearly, and who, when he lived in the house, had kindly tolerated her teasing, about her status as a minor and his as a statutory rapist. Now he had a new girlfriend, Lucy, who was exactly—*exactly*—like the Kay-Kay they'd known three years ago. She even sounded like the old Kay-Kay whenever she happened to answer Wesley's phone—sullen, stoned, suicidal. For just a second, you could be fooled, suddenly jerked back into the nightmare.

Midmorning, Emily rolled out of bed. In the kitchen she found the usual mess: Anna's sloppy breakfast makings, eggshells, milk left out to spoil, as well as the residue of the previous night's drinking—empty bottles and glasses, a crusty bowl of salsa, the tart odor of pickle juice, desiccated cheese rinds. Emily muttered as she ran hot water. She had been forever in this role: a mother first to her little sister, through their childhood and beyond, then to her husband, and then, of course, to Kay-Kay. Now, since Ian had declared bankruptcy and he, Anna, and Cherry Sue had moved in, she was a mother to her brother-in-law and her niece as well. And then there was Nana, who seemed more and more in need of mothering herself—unpleasant mothering, of the variety that involved wheedling and deception, and that would soon include feeding and diapering.

Responsibility was plaguing. Sometimes, to fight it, Emily was purposely irresponsible—she drank too much. She enjoyed drinking, the bright *pup* of the wine bottle relinquishing its cork, the gentle bell of stemware leaving the rack, the silly conversation over snacks and music, her brother-in-law showing his most tolerable self in service to the party, Henry just so happy to see everybody get along.

Emily had turned forty a week before. She hadn't thought she'd mind it, but evidently she did.

She drank cold water, then hot coffee. Some days, there was nothing but fluid.

Kay-Kay had left her school binder behind in a pool of syrup on the kitchen table. Emily pried it off and carried it upstairs to her daughter's bedroom, where she stood at the door. For years she'd snooped in Kay-Kay's life, read her diary, slit open the seams of her coat, turned over the dresser drawers, shoved a hand between the mattress and the box spring. She didn't want to do those things anymore. Suspicion was soul-killing. She told herself that Kay-Kay deserved her trust. She tossed the binder onto the bed and shut the door.

Sometimes at noon Kay-Kay came home from school. For a while, last fall, as she began her climb out of rage and wretchedness, she had brought friends back with her for lunch. She'd been proud of her quirky home life then, proud of her rambling old house with its many airy rooms, a place where you might come across her Aunt Anna sunbathing nude on the porch, or her father brandishing a civilized glass of Merlot at midday. "For my heart," he would say. "Purely medicinal." At noon, her boyfriend, Wesley, would be rising, zipping himself into his coveralls, ready for his shift at the lube pit; cute Cherry Sue would be humming in her high chair, Emily serving up lasagna or soup. It was a capacious kitchen, with a dining table made from an ancient farmhouse door, eight expectant chairs. Flowers in vases, fruit in bowls, cursing in the conversation.

But these days Kay-Kay mostly came home alone. She was getting ready to leave: high school, her friends, this house. Her future, Emily hoped, held college, Europe, Africa; what else had they been prepping—as well as preserving—her for but departure? Once upon a time, Emily had believed that she would do these things herself: attend Harvard, adopt orphans, observe the world from the basket of a hot-air balloon. But then she'd fallen in love with Henry—scandalously her elder, and married, to boot—and then with this funky old house, and then her daughter had been born. . . .

Today, Kay-Kay didn't come home for lunch.

Indulging his hangover, Henry rose from bed only long enough to cancel his appointments and lumber back. Fridays were half days anyway. Emily doubted that he'd even opened his eyes between bed and phone. He was a bear, gruff, kind, loyal to a fault. He had grown soft in their nineteen years together; she was his last wife, he always said, last and best. He'd had a starter wife for practice, and another for refining his skills. Now he performed with forbearance, faith, and patience, permitting Emily to be the hotheaded one while he stood by.

"Admit it!" Emily had accused him crazily on her fortieth birthday. "I'm the oldest woman you've ever slept with! Old women are *witches!* No one even *notices* them, let alone finds them attractive. *You* don't find old women attractive, admit it!"

"Not yet," he'd confessed mildly.

Still woozy now, Emily decided to join him in bed, nudging herself against his furry chest. They lay together into the afternoon, bound in a cocoon of indolence: it was spring again, and they had arrived here with their girl, after a long, treacherous journey, and it seemed that only now, just now, were they safely out of the woods. Henry slept, wheezing, and Emily lay in his arms, and it wasn't until three o'clock, when Anna borrowed Emily's car to pick up Cherry Sue, that anyone realized that something was wrong.

"You phoned this morning," Miss Juliet said, proving it by producing the form with the time, Anna's name, and the fact that Cherry Sue wouldn't be coming to school today. All the Misses at Montessori had the same voice, blameless and assured. If Cherry Sue wasn't there it wasn't *their* fault.

Kay-Kay's cell phone sent all calls immediately to voice mail. Her greeting was a leftover from the year before. "Kay-Kay says shut up and *fuck off!*" a boy yelled, Sid Vicious-ly. It wasn't even Wesley but a stranger, with Kay-Kay's slurred laughter in the background.

The next number Anna hit was her

husband's. Like Kay-Kay, Ian was sending callers to voice mail. Shaking, Anna phoned her sister, and Emily (who always answered) advised driving to East High. "School's not out yet. Maybe she took Cherry Sue with?"

"Maybe."

"Show-and-tell?"

"Sure."

At the house, Emily closed her eyes, thrown instantly back into the grim fright of the year before, and the year before that, and the year before that: her daughter, a force of nature, out wreaking havoc. "God damn it, Henry!" He sat up blurrily, his face imprinted with his own palm, as if he'd been slapped. She clapped the phone shut and threw it at him, fear leading directly to rage, and her husband, right there, ready to receive it.

School was letting out when Anna arrived. The wind had picked up, and dirt filled the air, trash flattened into the chain link. She drove against the current of muscle cars and trucks surging around her, unnerved by the exuberance with which the teen-agers handled their vehicles, their lives. They yelled and honked and screeched their tires, lighting cigarettes and popping up through sunroofs and out back windows, some riding on hoods, dust and exhaust whirling as they revved their engines. Anna scanned desperately for her niece's gold Celica, still willing to forgive Kay-Kay if she found her there. Plenty of students came to school with their babies, or with their big embarrassing bellies held before them like basketballs. Anna guessed that Kay-Kay wasn't beyond vying for some attention, a different kind of attention than she'd been accustomed to getting these past few years, when she'd been warned and suspended and flunked and arrested and handed poor marks not only in performance and attendance but in attitude and appearance as well—in *personality*, it seemed.

Often, Anna had defended her niece, even envied her—as if on behalf of her own former self, both patriotic and nostalgic for a lost homeland.

Now she searched the thinning trickle of cars and pedestrians with growing pessimism.

"They're not here," she told Emily on the phone, driving home.

"Where's Ian?" Emily demanded.

"*I* don't know." Anna had no idea what Ian did with himself; borrowing her sister's car had become a daily necessity.

"We ought to find Ian." He had been helpful on a few occasions. He'd located tolerable community service for Kay-Kay after her possession conviction. He'd stayed up all night talking to the speedy girl when the other adults were utterly worn out. Once, when she'd declared that she would be fine with being a prostitute, he took her to the seedy side of Wichita, to some strip clubs he knew, just to give her a taste.

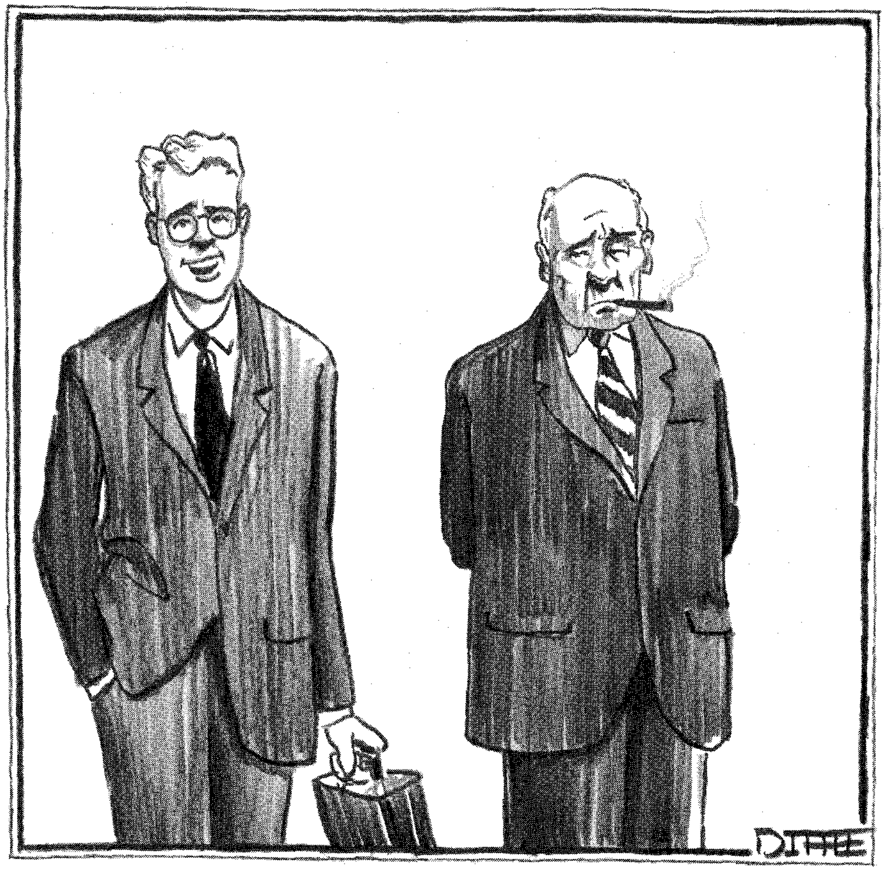
"You call him," Anna said. "He won't answer me."

Sure enough, Ian took Emily's call. The noise at his end of the line suggested a submarine. "Where are you?" she asked.

"Work," he said flatly. "What do you want?"

"I wonder if you've seen Kay-Kay. She took Cherry Sue this morning, but they didn't go to school." On his end she could hear a door close, an echoing clatter. Racquetball court, she guessed. He practically lived at the club, hanging out in the seating area of the juice bar, disguising himself as a healthy bodybuilder type when in fact he made most of his income dealing drugs in the parking lot and the men's locker room. His uniform was a warmup suit. A sport bottle full of vodka. Of particular appeal was the fact that he had an excuse to exit his in-laws' house every morning, leaving his killjoy wife and her stuck-up family to themselves.

Or at least that's what Emily thought he thought. She had no idea what really went on in her brother-in-law's head. He'd been hanging around in her life since he was a bratty neighbor boy ten years her junior. Often, she imagined the two words he'd most like to say to her: *Whatever, bitch.* Now she couldn't tell if his lack of reaction meant that he was thinking or merely stunned or already concocting a story. His silence was hermetic, and she was tempted to hang up. But Kay-Kay sometimes confided in Ian—he had the tactical advantage of being the other acknowledged delinquent in the house. Drunk, he could be endearing. The night before, for example, he'd



"When I left Princeton, I spent a summer briefcasing in Europe."

SCHOOL BU
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done hilarious imitations of all four principals in "The Wizard of Oz" as if they'd been pulled over for driving under the influence.

Sober, however, he defaulted to paranoia. "I know what you're thinking," he said.

"No, you don't," she assured him.

Ian said, "Let me get back with you," and hung up.

" 'Get back' with me?" Emily said to Anna, who was coming through the mudroom door. "He said he'll *get back* with me."

"He's an asshole," Anna said for at least the hundredth time. Then she turned her pleading, tear-streaked face to her big sister. "Where *are* they?"

Meanwhile, Henry had pulled himself out of bed to perform his ritual: driving around. He had done this whenever Kay-Kay or any of the pets had disappeared. It never paid off, but it seemed somehow necessary, a biological imperative. He was confirming that the obvious explanation didn't prevail: the lost dog wasn't chasing tail at the park or lying like a rug in the road; the girls weren't parked down at the Dairy Queen or visiting any of Kay-Kay's known acquaintances.

The last time she'd run away, she'd taken a bus to Burning Man; the time before that, she'd hitchhiked to Ohio. But she'd never before had her own getaway vehicle. It was Henry who had insisted on buying Kay-Kay a car, even though Emily was opposed. They'd argued for weeks—the girl had totalled two of the family cars in a single year!—and later Emily had grudgingly acknowledged that he had been right: Kay-Kay had got a job to pay for gas, had not had one ticket or wreck, and often volunteered for trips to the grocery store or to drop off Cherry Sue.

But now look what had happened. Wait around long enough, Emily thought, and you can win any argument.

Henry slapped at his jacket pocket before he left, to show her that he had remembered his phone.

"Pointless," Emily said, of his errand. "Complete waste of time."

Anna began to cry again. "I'm being punished!" she said to Emily.

"For what?"

"Bellyaching about Cherry Sue! Being pissy about being pregnant!"

"Oh, please, Anna. You're not being punished."

"Why can't I learn to keep my big mouth shut? Just count my fucking blessings?" Anna threw herself into a kitchen chair.

"Stop it, stop it. You're hungry." Emily was already pulling open the cupboard doors. "You need to eat."

That evening, the usual emergency-vehicle sirens seemed especially frequent and jarringly loud; the wind blew so hard that it whistled through all the old house's cracks. Tornado season was upon them again; possibly they'd end up in the basement tonight.

Their three cell phones lay on the scarred kitchen table while Emily microwaved leftovers for Henry and Anna. She herself had taken a Valium.

It was Anna who noticed the wall calendar. "Today is Friday the thir*teenth!*" she wailed.

"Kay-Kay doesn't know that," Emily said. "She loses track of what month it is, let alone the date."

"I probably should have seen my patients today," Henry said reflectively, a napkin tucked like a bib into his collar. "Some of them are surely superstitious." He had stopped at the police station while he was driving around and ascertained that there'd been no accidents involving a gold Celica, no ambulance summons for a teen-ager and a toddler. His oldest daughter's husband, Buzz, was a cop; he'd promised to keep an eye out. "The desk sergeant asked if I wanted to report a *kidnapping*," Henry told Emily and Anna. "I mean, really." He rocked his head in disbelief; he'd never grown accustomed to thinking of Kay-Kay as a criminal, even when she'd been arrested and charged, found guilty and made to pay—this despite the fact that he made his living hearing how people were routinely failed by their loved ones. At the office, he used the when-did-you-stop-beating-your-wife approach, asking not *if* but *how often* his patients fell short. With his daughter, however, he was as blustering and dumbfounded as a sitcom stereotype, a dad handicapped by blind love.

Tonight, Henry kept positing the same fuzzy scenario. "She's doing something for somebody," he said. "Somebody in crisis, who called her on her way to school. And then it was more complicated than she thought—it snowballed."

"If somebody lured Kay-Kay with a phone call," Emily said, "it wasn't about helping someone."

"But why take Cherry Sue?" Anna asked. "Why run away *with* a two-year-old? I'm always trying to run away *from* her."

"Kay-Kay would never let anything happen to Cherry Sue," Henry assured his sister-in-law.

"Not on purpose," Emily amended.

Henry gave his wife the familiar disappointed look. "Please, Em," he said, not wanting to believe her heartless.

"I didn't mean what I said about running away from Cherry Sue," Anna said pleadingly. "She's a lot of work, but she's good company. *Much* better company than her dad." Nobody disagreed with her.

The house phone rang, and Emily answered, then held it up so that they could all listen to the high-school-attendance-office recording letting them know that their "son or daughter missed one or more classes today."

"Oh, fuck you," they chimed in unison while the voice went on in its flat scolding way about what steps should be taken next. They'd heard it many, many times before. Kay-Kay's trouble, however often it had involved officials—the rule-makers and the rule-enforcers—had never been solved by them.

The mudroom door slammed open but yielded only Wesley, the ex. "Find her?" he asked. He wore his dirty garage coveralls with his name on the pocket, long-sleeved because his boss couldn't abide tattoos. "I drove by Nana's, just to see if her car was there, but it wasn't . . ." Wesley trailed off. "It smells good in here."

Emily offered him food, but he declined, gesturing toward the driveway, where the new girlfriend, Lucy, was smoking a cigarette.

"I'll stop by the hookah bar," he volunteered. "And maybe Java the Hut. I've got my cell."

"Good man," Henry said.

"Thanks, Wes," Emily said, smiling wanly at him. She'd always thought he was too nice for the likes of Kay-Kay, who, Emily believed, required a little wickedness.

"WHERE R U??" Anna text-messaged Ian at midnight. It embarrassed her not to know where her husband was, not to know for sure that he wasn't somehow involved in the girls' disappearance. Her mother had labelled him a hoodlum years ago; as a teen-ager, he'd stolen dogs in order to claim the rewards. Anna herself had collected the cash, since she looked more like a savior than Ian. Another time, he'd shown her how easy it was to break into homes, summoning a locksmith and waltzing right into the neighbors' house. Ian had handed down to Kay-Kay his black shirt with a neon-yellow "SECURITY" emblazoned on the back. In it, you could go anywhere, do anything.

"Looking for girls," he texted back. Anna knew that this was true—but *which* girls?

She glanced up to find her big sister glaring at her, giving her an order. "You should sleep." Pregnancy was insistent that way. This new baby, no bigger than a plum, was overruling her ability to stay alert on behalf of her other baby. She left her phone with Emily, knowing that its ring might not rouse her.

Emily sent Henry to bed, too. He kissed her cheek, leaving her on the couch, where, every hour, she dialled Kay-Kay's number.

At four-thirty, her daughter finally responded. A couple of lines of text appeared: "We r fine Dont worry! Luv u."

The message proved that Kay-Kay was in possession of her phone, her wits, and her cousin. Nevertheless, Emily began to cry, and, of course, this was when Ian arrived home, sneaking in like a thief.

"What?" he said, alarmed.

"She called," Emily said. "They're fine, she says."

He smelled of a bar. She wanted to kill him—for being who he was and not someone else, for catching her in tears. He had never liked her, not even when he was a child. Always he'd preferred Anna; always he'd chosen Anna over Emily. Now he was beholden to Emily, her unhappy house guest. He blinked his heavy-lidded eyes. "A couple of people have seen her today," he said, dropping into the easy chair.

"Really?"

"They think so. Cherry Sue is hard to miss, specially with that cast on her arm. They had breakfast at the I-Hop by Nana's, then around noon they were out busking with a guitar in Old Town."

"Where have you been?"

"Everywhere."

"Buzz knows to look for her."

"Buzz?"

"Henry's son-in-law, the cop."

Ian scowled now; Emily thought she could read his mind: What good was a cop to them? Hadn't Ian himself supplied the most useful information yet?

"I talked to her earlier," he said, rising.

"What?"

"She said that we really upset her last night. She's feeling disappointed in all of us, you and me and Anna and Henry, all of us. She said she—"

"She called *you*?"

His mouth snapped shut, and Emily knew that he wouldn't open it again. *Whatever, bitch.* Fuming, she listened as he made his way up the stairs and down the hall to the room that he and Anna shared.

On Saturday, the sky was murky, churning with a wind that seemed to want to tear the roof from the house. Henry called Buzz to confirm that nothing bad had happened overnight on the police radio band. Emily made herself turn Kay-Kay's room upside down, page through her journal, sniff at her jewelry box, open her closet and drawers and CD cases. But Emily knew that if Kay-Kay wanted to hide something these days it would be in her car, in the trunk she could lock.

"What else did she say to Ian?" Emily finally asked Anna. Pride had prevented her from asking him. Pride, and the fear that he would tell her that it was none of her fucking business. Like a teenager, he had the capacity to shame you—even when you knew he was in the wrong.

"She said that we were terrible role models." Anna was making bread, keeping busy. She leaked a tear or two into the dough, continuing to knead.

"Terrible role models?" Emily and Henry said together. Henry was making a "Missing" poster, with photographs—Cherry Sue in nothing but a diaper, Kay-Kay still sporting braces. He'd had to find a photo where her hair was its natural color, not the coal-black she'd dyed it until last Christmas.

"That's what Ian said she said." Anna wasn't sure that she believed her husband. It would be just like him to try to take advantage of the situation to punish his wife and her family.

"I *was* telling stories about my patients," Henry said, chastened. "About the stalker, and a few of my chem-deps—"

"You never said any names," Anna assured him. "You're always really careful to protect privacy."

"Still, I shouldn't have been talking about them."

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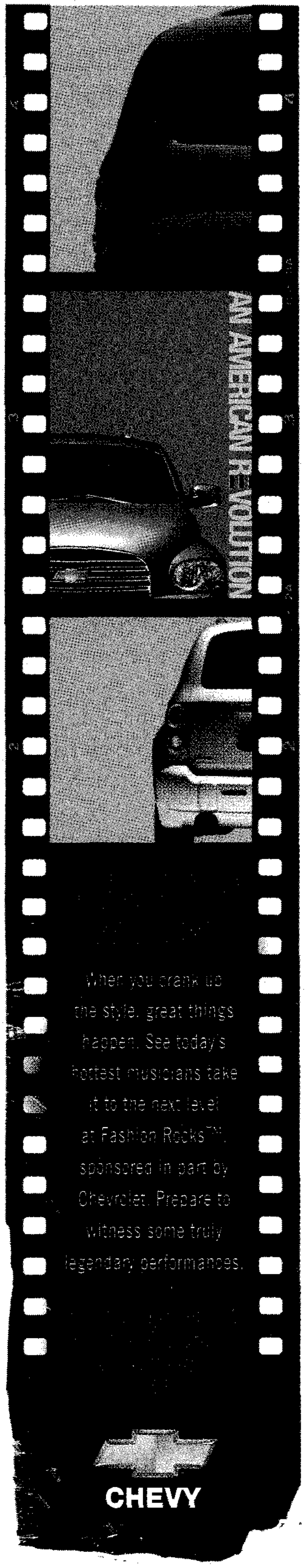

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"I'm sure that wasn't it."

Emily sat across from Henry at the table, staring into her coffee as she tried to reconstruct the evening; she was prepared to take responsibility. But for what, exactly? For having been too drunk to remember, she supposed. She could recall Ian making them all laugh: the cop pulling over the drunks on the Yellow Brick Road, the Lion, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, even that wacky dwarf, representative of the Lollipop Guild. And round-heeled, blasted Judy Garland, in her earnest full-throated way, inviting the officer for a romp in the poppy field. It had seemed like a good evening, Kay-Kay joining them for dinner, sticking around as the hour grew late, rocking Cherry Sue on her hip, helping Anna fix snacks, changing the CD when Ian complained about Henry's music. Emily had the impression that they had been trying to please the teen-ager, all four of the adults staging an impromptu production called "Life Is Worth Living," right here at this very table.

What they had learned about Kay-Kay, during the past few years, was that she truly could not see the point, that she did not care whether she lived or died. And, if she did not care, what was to stop her from following whatever impulse seized her? Sleep with a stranger? Why not? Inject an unknown drug? O.K. Hitchhike, wander the streets, invite outlaws into her life and hallucinations into her head—all of it without regard for what her family kept calling "the consequences," a future with her in it. They all agreed that it was Cherry Sue who'd saved her, Cherry Sue who'd been able to light what otherwise seemed a dark void—by loving Kay-Kay as passionately as she did, by assigning Kay-Kay special status as queen of her heart. Her name had been the second one Cherry Sue said, right after Mama; when she finally learned to walk, it was Kay-Kay's arms she aimed for and fell into.

"What do you think?" Henry asked now, holding up his poster. He put himself into motion without waiting for an answer. He would photocopy it, and then drive around posting it: in Old Town, on Douglas, by East and the other high schools, at Wal-Marts and gas stations and bars and grocery stores and truck stops and at both of the big malls. "I'll have my cell," he assured Emily, patting his pocket.

"Absolutely futile," Emily told Anna when he was gone.

They watched through the window as branches flailed in the wind above the trampoline, Ian's sole contribution to the household. He had brought it home the same way he did all his dubious belongings, with the implicit instruction that no one ask questions.

The trampoline vibrated, like a living thing. When it was first set up, Cherry Sue and Kay-Kay had climbed right on and begun to bounce together, holding hands. They danced on it to Kay-Kay's boom-box music; they loped around its rubber surface singing about the Muffin Man; they lay upon it in the dark, after it had absorbed the sun all day, watching as the stars popped on.

Emily hadn't wanted to accept the trampoline, not because it came from Ian but because she had foreseen the broken limb or crushed skull. Somebody would be made to pay, she knew. Some bone would have to be offered up. In the end, the sacrifice was Cherry Sue's, her little left wrist. Off to the E.R. they'd raced, the two-year-old sobbing into Kay-Kay's neck while Emily weaved through traffic, Anna riding shotgun, crying uselessly. Emily had met her daughter's eyes in the rearview mirror, a complicit glance between them, the levelheaded ones. Emily had liked that moment.

Now, with her sister flour-dusted and sad before her, Emily recalled another piece of Thursday evening's conversation. This had concerned their childhood. When they were young, and shared a bedroom, it had been Emily's habit to lie on the bunk above Anna and cross-examine her about her imaginary friend. Every night, the same conversation:

"Tell me what she looks like," Emily would insist.

"No."

"What's she doing right now?"

"I'm not telling."

Night after night Emily wheedled, by turns threatening and pleading. She was a bully and she had to win. Finally, she'd pledged, "If you tell me her name, I'll name my first child after her." This promise she'd made at age nine. Down below, a long silence came from her four-year-old sister.

And then Anna had said, "Her name is Kay-Kay."

"*That's* why you named me Kay-Kay?" Kay-Kay had asked, Thursday night.

"You knew that already," Emily said, tilting her empty wineglass once more into her mouth, not wanting to open a third bottle.

"I did not."

"I didn't, either," Anna claimed.

"I've told you both, a thousand times." The thing about being Anna's sister was that, by the time Emily made good on her end of the deal, Anna had forgotten it was owed—was totally nonplussed over the telephone when Emily called blissfully from the delivery room. But Anna had been a scornful teen-ager herself then, repulsed by her sister's marriage to a man practically their father's age.

That had been a long time ago. Now Anna knew all about the tender sentiment attached to babies and their names. When she was pregnant herself, she'd agreed to the name that Ian chose; at that point, she had wanted him to stick around. "Cherry Sue," he'd declared. "Just like my first Z car, may she R.I.P."

"I don't even remember *having* an imaginary friend," Anna said to Emily now, as if she, too, had been trying to reconstruct Thursday night. "Maybe I already knew that the imaginary ones worked out better than the real ones?"

Ian entered the kitchen. "You got a problem with reality?" he said to Anna.

On the table, one of the cells rang with Kay-Kay's awful tone. It was Anna's, a text message: "How much Ch Sue weigh?"

"Why is she asking me this?" Anna cried.

"*What* the *fuck*?" Ian said.

Emily took only a moment to process the request. "She's giving her Tylenol," she deduced. "She wants to get the right dose."

"I don't *know* how much Cherry Sue weighs!" Anna burst into tears.

Ian said, "What could it be, like forty?" He was making fists, flexing his elbows as if hefting barbells.

"Twenty-five," Emily instructed. She remembered from the E.R., when the bone had been set. "Let me text her back."

"Thanp" was Kay-Kay's reply.

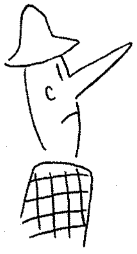
Saturday night was a repeat of Friday night, with the actors now sick of their roles, stuck in the production. Ian had not come home, and Anna's new baby was urging her to bed. Henry had developed the dark circles beneath his eyes that indicated that a migraine was coming, and Emily was furious at the helpless way he looked out from their depths. "A hundred posters," he'd said, accounting for his exhaustion. There was a fleet of pill bottles on his night table, the place where his age was most evident. "Go to bed," she snapped. "I'll stay here with the phones."

At 2 A.M., Wesley called. There was wind and static on his end. He was outside a party from which he had been banished, but he thought that Kay-Kay might be there. "Lucy needs to chill," he explained, so he was going to drive her home, but he gave Emily the address.

It took Emily two seconds to decide to call Ian instead of waking either of the others; as usual, he took the call, albeit unhappily. "Yeah?" he said. He, too, was standing outside a party. He smelled of bonfire when he picked Emily up ten minutes later.

"This is a weird address," he noted. "You sure she'd be here?"

"No," Emily said. The address, it turned out, was a house in a new subdivision, not yet finished, with a baby-blue Porta-Potty tilting in the front yard, stakes and PVC pipes strewn about, the only lights coming from within the giant structure itself.



To Ian's credit, he performed beautifully as party crasher. He nodded as they entered the massive front door, murmuring a few "How's it going"s as they pushed through the crowded rooms, Emily following in his wake. The place was cavernous, echoing, warmed by body heat, smelling of sawdust. Men with stringed instruments played folk music in a corner. The people milling around, holding plastic cups and cigarettes, were older than Kay-Kay by a decade or more. Many wore cowboy hats; a yard-long sheet cake rested on a set of sawhorses.

Ian said, "This isn't a party, it's a hoedown."

"I'm looking for Kay-Kay," Emily said hopefully to the man tapping the keg in the kitchen.

"Hey, yeah," he said. "Where is that *chica*?" Everyone recognized the name and nodded, smiling fondly, but no one had seen her. Ian accepted a plastic cup of beer, then grimaced as he drank.

"I was picturing teen-agers," Emily confided to him. Some bit of Kansas miscreance, a meth lab maybe.

"You were picturing a big-ass opium den of iniquity," Ian scoffed. "I guess I was, too."

Emily canvassed the first floor, just to make sure, and then headed upstairs, carefully, since there was not yet a rail. Here were the future bedrooms, five of them, each white, and blank, vacant bathrooms, the smell of new carpet still in rolls. Out the windows, other hulking houses, dark like quiet ships. Was it just fatigue that made everything seem strange to her? she wondered. She dialled Wesley. "Where did you think she might be, exactly?"

"I couldn't get to the upstairs."

"I'm there. It's totally empty."

"Huh. Hang on, Emily." Wesley was talking to somebody on his end. "I'm at St. Francis," he said apologetically. "Lucy may have O.D.'d."

"May have?"

"She turned blue. Now she looks better—her mom says she's hypoglycemic, so sometimes that happens—but we're already here . . ." he trailed off, sighing. Once again at the hospital: he'd performed a similar duty on Kay-Kay's behalf, not that long ago. ("If one is good," Kay-Kay had explained, "why wouldn't two be better?") "I'm sorry," Wesley said. "I thought Kay-Kay might have been staying at that place. She knows some of the guys working on it. I gotta go, Emily. We're up."

"Good luck, Wes," she said.

Emily went back downstairs to find Ian accepting a second beer from the man in the kitchen. "Coors?" he asked Emily. "Cake?"

"No, thanks. I was hoping somebody had seen my daughter."

"They're not here," Ian said, downing his beer in one wincing swallow.

"Thanks for coming!" a few people called as they exited.

In the car, Ian snorted. "Yee-haw." Then he grabbed his thrumming phone. "I'll drop you off," he said, studying its screen.

Anna, in her dream that night, birthed an apple. A green apple. The same green as Cherry Sue's cast. In her last dream, she'd had a small black monkey, his chattering mouth full of teeth, his hair greasy. In another, she'd produced kittens, a litter of three, and one had died, just quit breathing right before her eyes. She wondered sometimes what her brother-in-law, the professional interpreter of dreams, would say about hers, what he would know about her if he heard what went on in her sleeping head.

Tonight the tornado warning siren swooped into Anna's dream but didn't wake her; it was Emily who pulled her to her feet and led her down into the basement, where the three of them leaned against each other on the moldering couch, waiting for the all clear.

Sarah, Henry's oldest daughter and Buzz's wife, arrived Sunday morning with the sun. Heavy, stoic Sarah with the hairdo, holding a hot casserole before her. Besides the oven mitts, she was dressed for church. Her greeting was a list of ingredients: egg, sausage, hash browns, cheese. "And cream-of-mushroom soup," she finished. Sarah always wore a sorrowful expression in her father's house, as if she saw all of its inhabitants headed in that handbasket toward Hell. At first, Emily had reciprocated, pitying Sarah back. Later, when Kay-Kay had gone wild, she simply refused to make eye contact.

The sky was blue, the air still. Emily began thanking her stepdaughter perfunctorily. At this, Sarah gazed demurely out the kitchen window, saddened but not surprised at what had befallen this group of savages. Then her brow furrowed. Out there on the trampoline slept the two missing girls, plus someone else. You could see the blond heads tipped together, little Cherry Sue's neon-green cast on top of the tarpaulin covering them. "Thank you, Jesus," Sarah murmured, pointing. "There they are," she said.

"Ian said you were upset by us Thursday night."

"Why did he say that?"

Emily glared at her brother-in-law, who glared back. *Whatever, bitch.* "You weren't?"

"I may have been." Kay-Kay shrugged. She had the air of someone to whom blame could not be attached, nor shame or repentance, either. "It's temporary," she'd said of the rainbow tattoo on her shoulder, before Emily could ask. Cherry Sue had a matching one on her thigh.

Ian said, "I thought you were on the run from the Man."

Kay-Kay scoffed. "That's you, not me. Why weren't you all worried about poor Nana?"

The third person sleeping on the trampoline had been Anna and Emily's mother, also missing these past two days. She, and her little dirty-white dog, unmissed by her children. This was unforgivable, according to Kay-Kay, though she was clearly also bemused.

"I thought you'd been carjacked," Henry confessed, wiping his eyes. "I thought you'd picked up hitchhikers and got stolen, a good deed gone bad." He kept laying his hand on Kay-Kay's shoulder, as if never to let her leave home again. Kay-Kay studied the "Missing" poster. "I'll have to go take those down," he said.

Kay-Kay nodded. "I'll help."

Why weren't they angrier? Emily wondered. Why had the girls' return inspired so little in her and Anna and Henry and Ian besides relief? What was wrong with them that this was their reaction—this sense of gratitude, as if Kay-Kay had performed a rescue rather than the reverse? Cherry Sue nuzzled at Anna's neck, absolutely fine, a faint sunburn on the bridge of her nose and her cheeks as if from healthy recreation.

"You never once dialled Nana's cell," Kay-Kay said. "We checked."

"I wasn't thinking of her," Emily admitted. "You O.K., Mom?"

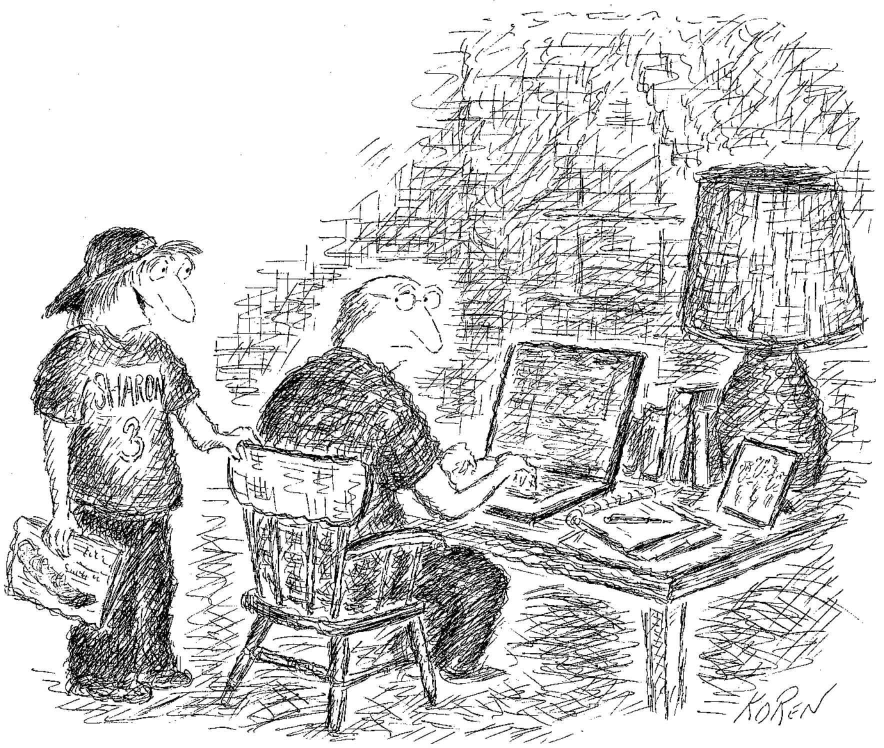
"Why wouldn't I be?" Nana sat at the table with her dog in her lap, no worse for wear, unkempt in her usual way. She had enjoyed her trip with the girls. Medicine Lodge, a hundred miles southwest, was her home town. She hadn't visited there in she didn't know how long. "We stood in the back yard of the old farmhouse."

"That's right, Nana. For our picture."

"That fellow with the cart full of cans took it for us."

"You gave him a dollar."

"And then Nipper ran off after a rabbit."



"Dad, would you consider a leadership gift to my snowboard capital campaign?"

"That's right."

Nana looked relieved, as always, to have her memory confirmed. She wore her standard floral muumuu; her hair hardly existed anymore, a few white tufts. Her fingers twitched in her pet's fur, which was filled with twigs and burrs and mulberry fluff. She had not panicked when picked up by her granddaughter on Friday morning; for all she knew, it was a plan they'd made. "They've always had the best pie at the Toot Sweet," she recalled. "And we slept in a motel." *Moe*-tel.

"I sleep with Kay-Kay," Cherry Sue said, smiling slyly.

"You drove to Medicine Lodge and checked into a motel?" Ian asked skeptically.

"Nana wanted to visit the old homestead," Kay-Kay said. "It's pretty out there. Some places, you can't even get phone reception."

Sarah had served everyone a glass of milk, though only Cherry Sue ever drank the stuff. As soon as she'd seen the girls and their grandmother, Sarah had phoned Buzz to say that she would be missing church today. Called to a higher need, she'd tucked a dish towel into her waistband and begun spooning out her eggy casserole while the family sat obediently. The blandness of the offering went with the blandness of the adventure being described. From the old woman and the baby they learned that there'd been burgers along with the pie, Tylenol for teething, television, some jumping on the beds, games of go fish, a walk around Nana's old land and ruined house, the three of them holding hands, moving slowly, trailed by Nana's little dog, trotting along leashless.

Emily listened, marvelling, exhausted: the most dramatic things, it seemed, had been happening here at home, in their heads. They had woken this morning from an experience that was precisely like a nightmare—Technicolor catastrophes, figments of imagination, suspicion, now totally erased in the light of an ordinary day. There hadn't even been storms in Medicine Lodge, the bad weather passing just north of there. "We should call Wesley," she noted absently. He'd no doubt had a bad dream or two himself.

"I texted him," Kay-Kay said. "He's still at St. Francis with the freak."

"Nipper's a bad dog," Cherry Sue reported, pulling out her pacifier. "*You a bad dog*," she sang at the animal.

"Nipper tends to run away," Nana said, plucking at his nasty fur. "Just to scare us silly. Oh, we called and called, till we were blue in the face." But then she wasn't certain and turned uneasily to Kay-Kay.

"Hours, Nana," Kay-Kay assured her. Both Emily and Anna waited for the girl to make a meaningful ironic comment, to let them know that she, too, had run away for the thrill of scaring some people silly, of taking their concern out for one last whirl. But Kay-Kay went back to forking up the sausage-and-egg casserole, drinking milk. Apparently, she'd forsaken her decade-long vegetarianism. On the back of the hand holding the fork was a seven-leafed marijuana plant she'd carved into it in ninth grade, a faint, fading white. She'd removed the metal stud from her tongue and the ring from her lip, so silverware went in and out without clinking. If she wasn't careful, Emily and Anna thought at the same time, she would run to fat, like Henry's other daughters.

She hadn't gone anywhere alarming. She hadn't done anything dangerous. Could they be disappointed?

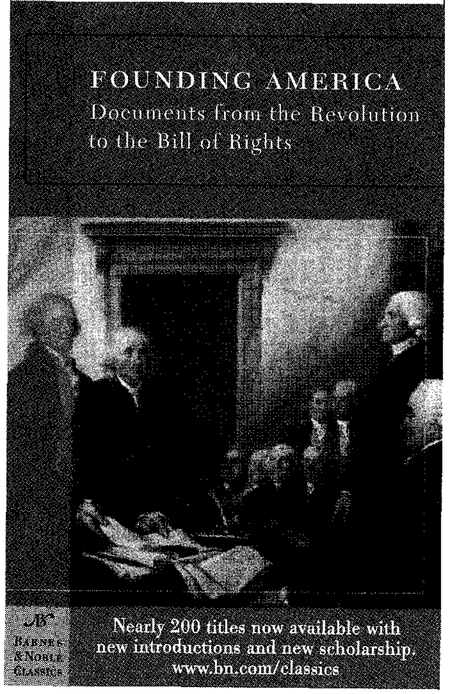
"Oh, hey, check out the picture," Kay-Kay said, wiping her mouth and flipping open her phone. She found the image.

Around the table went the cell phone, everyone squinting at the mini-picture of Nana, Kay-Kay, Cherry Sue, and Nipper. They stood beside a broken storm-cellar door, above them the bleached Kansas sky. Three big grins, and Nipper with his nose in the air, preparing to run. "I'm gonna get a print made for you, Nana," Kay-Kay told her grandmother. She took back her phone and gazed into its tiny depths. "In black-and-white, don't you think? Wouldn't that be best?" ♦

OH, IN THAT LIGHT DEPARTMENT

From the Yale Herald.

The cover article incorrectly stated that the parents of Megan Crandell, PC '07, annually attend naked grape-crushing parties. In fact, her parents' friends used to throw occasional naked grape-crushing parties while in college.



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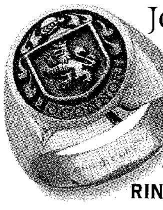

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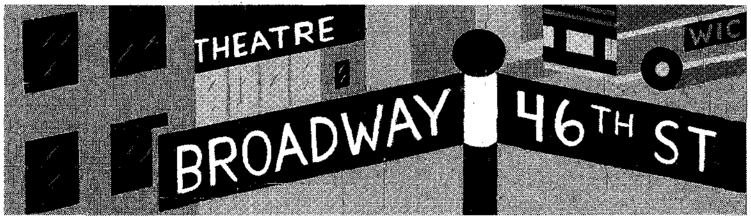


BOOKS

BOB ON BOB

Dylan talks.

BY LOUIS MENAND

"Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews"—I'm not sure those are words that make the heart beat faster. "*Dylan nil a me alienum puto*," as Terence put it (or would have put it, if he had lived long enough): nothing having to do with Dylan can be alien to me. Still, as an interview subject, Dylan probably ranks a few notches above Elvis, who was one of the all-time worst. The trouble with Elvis was that he had very little to say; he was mainly concerned about sounding polite. Dylan is rarely concerned about sounding polite, and he says things, but he sometimes makes them up. He also contradicts himself, answers questions with questions, rambles, gets hostile, goes laconic, and generally bewilders. What makes it truly frustrating is that, somewhere in the stream of inconsequence and obstreperousness, there are usually a few nuggets of gold. The nuggets make interviewers think that the other stuff must be a put-on, that Dylan could speak with the tongue of angels all the time if he wanted to, and this makes them press harder, hoping that the next question will break through the misdirection and resistance, and the man in front of them will turn into "Bob Dylan." Since there is nothing Dylan likes less than being mistaken for "Bob Dylan"—"If I wasn't Bob Dylan, I'd probably think that Bob Dylan has a lot of answers," he once said—this is not a productive interview dynamic.

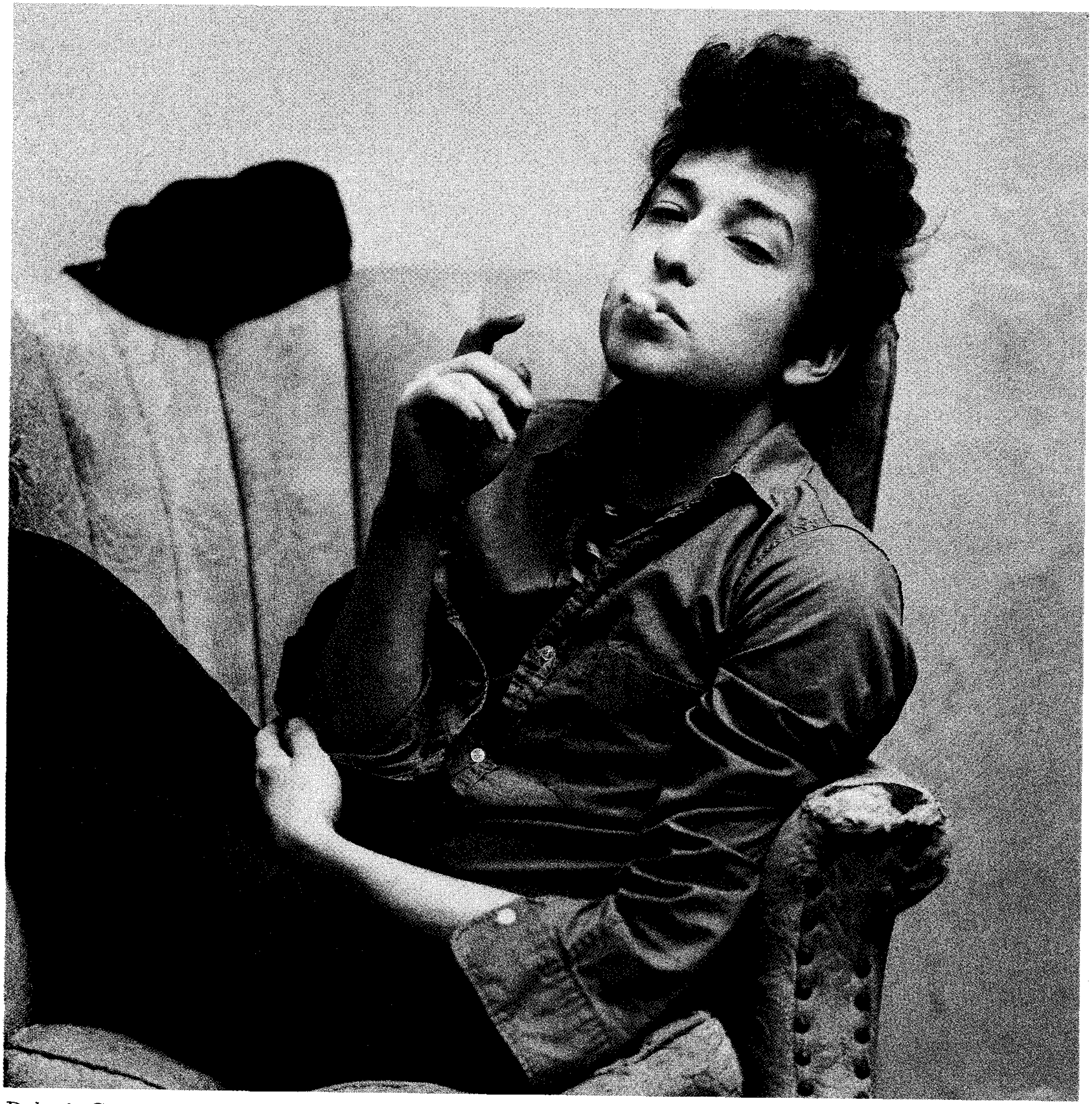
"The Essential Interviews" (Wenner; $23.95) was assembled by Jonathan Cott, a longtime contributor to *Rolling Stone* and Dylan idolater unabashed. The book collects thirty-one pieces, not all of which are interviews of the Q.&A. type. They include Nat Hentoff's *New Yorker* Profile of Dylan, from 1964; a precociously observant report by Jay Cocks, for a campus publication, on Dylan's visit to Kenyon College in 1964; a funny, completely insane piece by A. J. Weberman, the man who is famous for sorting through Dylan's garbage, which first appeared in the *East Village Other*, in 1971; a selection from Robert Shelton's biography of Dylan, "No Direction Home," a work fairly described as sprawling, which came out in 1986; and a deft and atmospheric dramatic dialogue by Sam Shepard, which was published in *Esquire* in 1987. Of the more conventional interviews, seven are from *Rolling Stone* (two of them conducted by Cott), three are from the Los Angeles *Times* (all with Robert Hilburn, the paper's pop-music editor), and two are from *Playboy*.

The discrepancy between Dylan the interview subject and Dylan the musician is not an artifact of celebrity. It seems to have been part of the deal from the start, and it's almost the first thing that people who knew him mention when they're asked about their initial impression. "I wanted to meet the mind that created all those beautiful words," Judy Collins told David Hajdu for "Positively 4th Street," his delightful group biography of Dylan, Richard Fariña, and Joan and Mimi Baez. "We set something up, and we had coffee, and when it was over, I walked away, thinking, 'The guy's an idiot. He can't make a coherent sentence.' " The first time Joan Baez heard Dylan sing one of his own songs—he played "With God on Our Side" for her—she was floored. "I never thought anything so powerful could come out of that little toad," she said. She proceeded to fall madly in love with him, and bought him a toothbrush.

People who have this experience with Dylan tend to conclude that he is a complicated human being, but the logical conclusion is the opposite one. Shelton, for his biography, interviewed a man named Harry Weber, who knew, and didn't especially like, Dylan in Minneapolis, back in 1959, when Dylan was a student (sort of) at the University of Minnesota. "Dylan is a genius, that's all," Weber said. "He is not more complex than most people; he is simpler." On most subjects that normal people talk about, Dylan seems either not to have views or to have views indistinguishable from the views of everyone else who's hanging around the coffeehouse. His conversation is short and not always sweet. But there is one topic he does like. He is a songwriter. He likes to talk about songs. When interviewers figure this out, the work gets easier.

Of course, many of Dylan's interviewers want to talk about songs, too, Dylan's songs. Often, they try to get him to interpret them, but Dylan does not think that songs were meant to be interpreted, so this line of questioning can lead to some ugly dialectical moments. "What's your new album about?" Dylan was asked during a televised press conference in San Francisco in 1965. "Oh, it's about, uh—just about all kinds of different things—rats, balloons. They're about the only thing that comes to my mind right now," he said. He was talking about "Blonde on Blonde." It got worse:

> *Mr. Dylan, how would you define folk music?*
>
> As a constitutional re-play of mass production.
>
> *Would you call your songs "folk songs"?*
>
> No.
>
> *Are protest songs "folk songs"?*
>
> I guess, if they're a constitutional re-play of mass production.
>
> *Do you prefer songs with a subtle or obvious message?*
>
> With a what???
>
> *A subtle or obvious message?*



Dylan in Greenwich Village in 1963: he has said that the records he put out in the mid-sixties come closest to his particular sound.

DON HUNSTEIN/COURTESY SONY BMG MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

Uh—I don't really prefer those kinds of songs at all—"message"—you mean like—what songs with a message?

Well, like "Eve of Destruction" and things like that.

Do I prefer that to what?

I don't know, but your songs are supposed to have a subtle message.

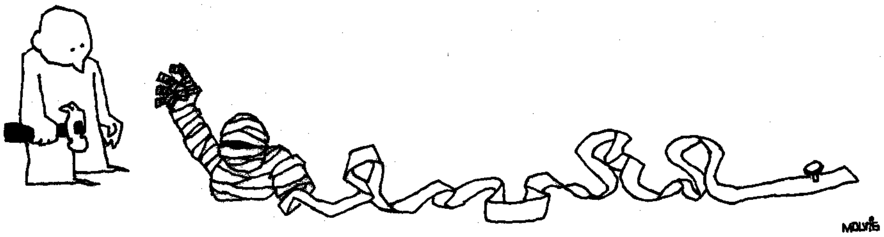
Subtle message???

Well, they're supposed to.

Where'd you hear that?

As the exchange suggests, Dylan was a put-down artist in the early years of his fame. Some of his best songs from the period are put-downs of a scorched-earth type: "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," "It Ain't Me, Babe," "Positively 4th Street," "Ballad of a Thin Man," "Like a Rolling Stone," "Just Like a Woman"—not works that exude the usual pop sentiments. In the infamous D. A. Pennebaker documentary about Dylan's 1965 British tour, "Don't Look Back," Dylan is seen turning poor Donovan into a quivering bowl of Jell-O. You feel that you would not have wanted to get on the wrong side of this guy. The indifference to other people's sensibilities contributed to the belief, which has shadowed Dylan for much of his career, that he was an opportunist.

Dylan started out as an acolyte of Woody Guthrie. He arrived in New York City in the winter of 1960-1961, on a mission, he said, to meet Guthrie, who was by then in a hospital in New Jersey, undergoing a slow death from Huntington's chorea. Dylan took the bus to visit him frequently, and played songs for him. Dylan was what one Village folkie called a "neo-ethnic": he sang songs by people like Guthrie and Leadbelly, imitating their voice and their



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sound. And he enhanced this folk persona by spreading make-believe accounts of his past: he told people (including reporters) that he was brought up in Gallup, New Mexico; that he had travelled through South Dakota, Kansas, Texas, Mexico, and other places, some of which he had never set foot in; that he had run away from home many times; that he had worked on and off for six years in a carnival. It wasn't until *Newsweek* ran a nasty story on him, in 1963, that the truth began to come out—that he was a bar-mitzvah boy named Robert Zimmerman from a middle-class family in Hibbing, Minnesota, the birthplace of Roger Maris.

Dylan was nineteen and very raw when he began playing in Village coffeehouses. By all accounts, though, he was a fantastically quick study. He picked up songs and techniques from everyone. By the fall of 1961, he had scored a rave review in the *Times* and a recording contract—not with one of the small labels, like Folkways, where most downtown musicians recorded, but with Columbia, where he was signed by the legendary John Hammond, the man who "discovered" Billie Holiday. His first album, "Bob Dylan," was released in March, 1962. It sold poorly (though it cost only about four hundred dollars to produce). People at Columbia started referring to Dylan as "Hammond's folly." The second album, "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan," released in May, 1963, was a different story. "Blowin' in the Wind," one of Dylan's earliest original songs, was on that album. Peter, Paul, and Mary recorded it (their manager, the formidable Albert Grossman, who had created them, was also Dylan's manager), and they released it that summer as a single. It was one of the year's biggest hits, and Dylan became famous as a writer of protest songs: "Masters of War," "Oxford Town," "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," "Only a Pawn in Their Game," "When the Ship Comes In," "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

Protest songs were a natural outgrowth of the folk revival, in the tradition of Guthrie and Seeger's Almanac Singers. Rock and roll was not. Dylan's big leap, the stuff of much myth and misinformation, was the one he made in 1965, when he went electric, and released, in a fourteen-month period, three albums without peers: "Bringing It All Back Home" (March, 1965), "Highway 61 Revisited" (August), and the double album "Blonde on Blonde" (May, 1966). The myth—based on stories that audiences booed his electric sets during his British tour in the spring of 1966 and at the Newport Folk Festival the previous summer—is that Dylan betrayed the folk-music movement by switching to a more commercial rock sound. A lot of critical labor has gone into proving that Dylan was not selling out but pursuing the road of musical correctness.

The labor is misplaced, because there is no road of musical correctness. The notion that there is was created by people like Hammond, who believed that American popular music arose from the untutored self-expression of African-Americans. Hammond's first enthusiasm was jazz, which he considered an essentially African-American musical idiom, and about which he observed, "The best of this art is usually simple, for when technique and virtuosity get in the way of real feeling the result is always dire." Hammond thought that performers like Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway (because of their "spurious showmanship") and Duke Ellington (because of his detachment from the troubles of what Hammond called "his race and original class") were inauthentic. (Hammond is the subject of a genial and enjoyable new biography by Dunstan Prial, "The Producer: John Hammond and the Soul of American Music"; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.)

Some fans did boo Dylan in 1965, but the reaction seems to have been a good deal less ideological than it was later taken to be. The problem at Newport, where the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and the Chambers Brothers also played with electric instruments, was largely an inadequate sound system. Dylan and his band played loud, and people couldn't hear the words. In any event, the music he performed wasn't new. "Like a Rolling Stone" had already come out; three weeks after Newport, it went to No. 2. In that month, August of 1965, forty-eight versions of Dylan's songs were produced by other artists. If there was a revolution, it was pretty painless.

The most credible judgment on the change in Dylan's music is Dave Van Ronk's. Van Ronk was a kingpin in the Village folk scene. He was from Queens, a jazz buff who switched to folk before the folk revival was even a gleam in Albert Grossman's eye. Though he never had a big hit, he remained traditional: he stuck with folk music and the blues. Many Village musicians resented Dylan's success; unlike most of them, Van Ronk had a reason to. Dylan stole his arrangement of "House of the Rising Sun," and put it on his first album, before Van Ronk had a chance to record it himself. Van Ronk dropped the song from his set because he got sick of people asking him to play Dylan's "House of the Rising Sun." (He noted with some satisfaction that a couple of years later, after the Animals had a hit with the song, Dylan dropped it from *his* set, because people kept asking him to play "that Animals song.") But Van Ronk was a big spirit, and in his posthumously published memoir, written with Elijah Wald, "The Mayor of MacDougal Street"—a wise and very funny book; in some ways a great book—he had this to say:

> I thought that going electric was a logical direction for Bobby to take. I did not care for all of his new stuff, by any means, but some of it was excellent, and it was a reasonable extension of what he had done up to that point. I knew perfectly well that none of us was a true "folk" artist. We were professional performers, and while we liked a lot of folk music, we all liked a lot of other things as well. Working musicians are very rarely purists. The purists are out in the audience kibitzing, not onstage trying to make a living. And Bobby was absolutely right to ignore them.

Nothing that Dylan did to get from Hibbing to "Blonde on Blonde" was scandalous, or even eccentric. He happened to come of musical age at a moment when rock and roll was moribund—Frankie Avalon stuff, songs for high-school sock hops. If you were serious, you played folk songs. And to become a folkie, unless you actually *were* from Oklahoma, you invented a persona. The whole folk revival was make-believe, anyway: it was urban kids trying to sound like hillbillies and sharecroppers. One of the folk-music veterans when Dylan came on the scene was Ramblin' Jack Elliott, a singer with a cowboy twang who had once hoboed around with Guthrie himself. Ramblin' Jack was the stage name of one Elliot Adnopoz, a Jewish kid from Flatbush whose father was a prominent surgeon. Cambridge was another center of the folk revival—it's where Baez got her start, in the coffeehouses around Harvard Square. (She was a B.U. dropout.) There was a bluegrass group in that scene, composed mostly of college students, who called themselves the Charles River Valley Boys. Artifice was the price of authenticity.

When Dylan left Minnesota, he had no idea that folk was the royal road to anything. If you were a folk singer in New York, you played in coffeehouses and passed around a basket for tips. No one got rich imitating Woody Guthrie. When Dylan cut his first records, though, folk was just becoming the ascendant pop musical genre. Baez's first album, "Joan Baez," had been a huge hit; released in November, 1960, it stayed on the *Billboard* charts for almost three years. Hammond didn't sign Dylan on a whim; he signed him (as Prial strangely neglects to say, but as Hajdu makes clear in "Positively 4th Street") because he had had a chance to sign Baez and lost her to Vanguard. His reputation for picking winners was in jeopardy; folk was hot, and he needed a folk singer.

In the early nineteen-sixties, the Weavers, Pete Seeger, the Kingston Trio, Harry Belafonte, and Peter, Paul, and Mary were heard everywhere. (We had all their records in my house when I was growing up. I'm not sure we could have said what the Rock Island Line *was*, exactly, but we knew that it was a mighty good road. It was the road to ride. We also owned, and regularly consulted, the "Fireside Book of Folk Songs," a big seller.) Guitar sales were running to a million units a year. At the height of the boom, in 1963, more than two hundred albums of folk music were released. The standard folk sound was the Seeger-Baez sound: earnest, reverent, acoustic, and completely sexless, everything Elvis was not. Dylan's music, in this context, had a snarly, disrespectful edge that cut. (We did not listen to Dylan in my house.) Plus, a lot of his songs were funny. Pete and Joan were not about funny. Rock and roll, meanwhile, was nowhere. Elvis was making albums like "Blue Hawaii."

Then, in February, 1964, the Beatles came to America, and rock and roll rose from the dead. The No. 1 album when the Beatles landed in New York was "The Singing Nun"—a virginal sound from an actual virgin! But, within minutes of the conclusion of the Beatles' performance on "The Ed Sullivan Show," the acoustic sound was pop history. The first time Dylan heard the Beatles, he was in a car somewhere and they came on the radio. He almost fell out the window. He loved them, and he must have seen, alert student that he was, what he could do with the electric sound. He pushed ahead, and the Beatles stayed right in step. At the same time that Dylan was putting out his first three electric albums, between March, 1965, and May, 1966, the Beatles released "Help" (August, 1965), "Rubber Soul" (December, 1965), and "Revolver" (August, 1966). It was a good time to be alive.

Dylan wasn't thinking about the direction of popular music in 1964, and he wasn't thinking about the direction of the Zeitgeist, either. "I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of," he says in his remarkable autobiography, "Chronicles: Volume I" (2004), and you believe him. He was, as usual, thinking only about his sound. It is always the sound that interests Dylan about a song, and one of the reasons that he is only semi-articulate in interviews is that you can't really describe a sound. It was Guthrie's sound that attracted him, not Guthrie's lyrics. When he heard Guthrie for the first time, he explains in the autobiography, "a voice in my head said, 'So this is the game.' " It was a lonesome sound; he knew he could get it. But Dylan also liked the Kingston Trio, ex-

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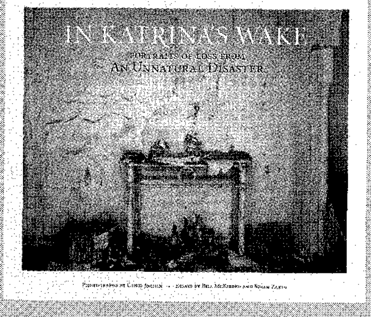

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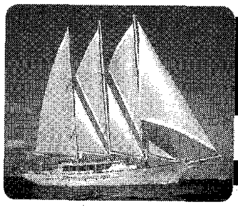

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college students from California with short hair and peppermint-striped shirts (a taste very much shared by the music-lovers in my house). He liked Judy Garland singing "The Man That Got Away" and Frank Sinatra singing "Ebb Tide." He loved "Stardust" and "Moon River." He didn't "come out of" any tradition. He was a magpie. The biggest inspiration for his songwriting was a Kurt Weill song, "Pirate Jenny," from "The Threepenny Opera." He heard it when he was waiting to meet his girlfriend, Suze Rotolo, who was working on a production of the play on Christopher Street. ("The Threepenny Opera" was followed by an anthology production called "Brecht on Brecht," which may have been the inspiration for the title of "Blonde on Blonde.")

You can't find the road that gets you from "Hell Hound on My Trail" and "This Land Is Your Land" through "Pirate Jenny" to "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands." Musicians don't follow roads. Most of them have much more eclectic musical interests than their fans do. Elijah Wald (Van Ronk's co-author), in his indispensable revisionist history of the blues, "Escaping the Delta," points out that Muddy Waters had more songs in his repertoire by Gene Autry, the Singing Cowboy, than by any blues musician; that Louis Armstrong's favorite band was Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians; and that Robert Johnson played Bing Crosby songs. "If I had only one artist to listen to through eternity," Chuck Berry said, "it would be Nat Cole."

That mid-sixties sound, the sound of "Blonde on Blonde" and "Rubber Soul," did not last. In 1978, when Dylan had just completed his second great three-album phase—"Blood on the Tracks" (1974), "Desire" (1976), and "Street Legal" (1978)—he was interviewed by Ron Rosenbaum for *Playboy*. Whatever else you want to say about the magazine, *Playboy* did give great interview, a product of stylish interviewers and brilliant editing. Rosenbaum gets off to a dicey beginning—"Besides being a singer, a poet, and now a filmmaker, you've also been called a visionary. Do you recall any visionary experiences while you were growing up?"—but, eventually, he gets around to the subject of Dylan's sound: "The closest I ever got to the sound I hear in my mind was on individual bands in the 'Blonde on Blonde' album," Dylan says. "It's that thin, that wild mercury sound. It's metallic and bright gold, with whatever that conjures up. That's my particular sound."

Was that wild mercury sound in "I Want You"?

Yeah, it was in "I Want You." It was in a lot of that stuff. It was in the album before that, too.

"Highway 61 Revisited"?

Yeah. Also in "Bringing It All Back Home." That's the sound I've always heard. . . .

The period when you came out with "Highway 61" must have been exciting.

Those were exciting times. We were doing it before anybody knew we would—or could. We didn't know what it was going to turn out to be. Nobody thought of it as folk-rock at the time. There were some people involved in it like The Byrds, and I remember Sonny and Cher and the Turtles and the early Rascals. It began coming out on the radio. I mean, I had a couple of hits in a row. That was the most I ever had in a row—two. The top ten was filled with that kind of sound—the Beatles, too—and it was exciting, those days were exciting. It was the sound of the streets. It still is. I symbolically hear that sound wherever I am.

You hear the sound of the street?

That ethereal twilight light, you know. It's the sound of the street with the sunrays, the sun shining down at a particular time, on a particular type of building. A particular type of people walking on a particular type of street. It's an outdoor sound that drifts even into open windows that you can hear. The sound of bells and distant railroad trains and arguments in apartment buildings and the clinking of silverware and knives and forks and beating with leather straps. It's all—it's all there. Just lack of a jackhammer, you know.

You mean if a jackhammer were—

Yeah, no jackhammer sounds, no airplane sounds. All pretty natural sounds. It's water, you know water trickling down a brook. It's light flowing through the . . .

Late-afternoon light?

No, it's usually the crack of dawn. Music filters out to me in the crack of dawn.

The "jingle jangle morning"?

Right.

There's not much to add to that.

Van Ronk thought that Dylan was sloppy, that he wrote his songs too fast. Even in Dylan's best songs (I know that my life will not be worth much after these words appear in print), there are lines that are truly lame. "And the words that are used/For to get the ship confused/Will not be understood as they're spoken" is not even lyrical, forget about the sense. "Ballad of a Thin Man" does not profit from the verse about the one-eyed midget shouting the word "NOW." ("And you say, 'For what reason?'/And he says, 'How?'/And you say, 'What does this mean?'/And he screams back, 'You're a cow/Give me some milk/Or else go home.' " Maybe it makes some kind of sense as a proto-hip-hop rant.) Dylan's words—he has said as much—are often placeholders, devices to fit the melody and fill out the line, which is why dutiful efforts to extract a message or a meaning are largely beside the point. If you want a message, buy a newspaper. "Songs are songs," Dylan says in one of his early interviews. "I don't believe in expecting too much out of any one thing."

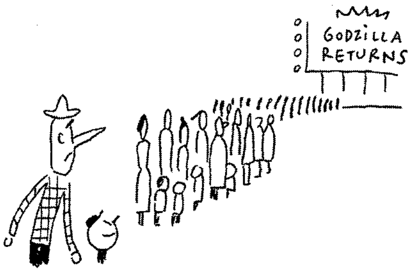
Sloppy or not, Dylan is astonishingly prolific; he has written more than five hundred songs. Most of them are lovely (or angry or joyous or wickedly sly or all of those things together). Many of them are unforgettable. (A new album, Dylan's forty-fourth, called "Modern Times," is being released this month. The songs are simple riffs, with laid-back arrangements, and all feature prominently Dylan's gorgeous late-period croak. It sounds a little the way "Buena Vista Social Club" might have sounded if Cuba had been the birthplace of the blues.) The only comparable pop songbook from the era is Lennon-McCartney—and there were two of them. Dylan is also, despite the silly things people said about his voice when he started out, one of pop music's greatest vocalists. His chief weakness is a tendency to shout, particularly in performance (and he is, let us say, an inconsistent performer); but, when he is in control of the instrument, no one's voice, with that kind of music, is more textured or more beautiful.

Ninety per cent of musicianship is phrasing, and the easiest way to appreciate Dylan's genius for phrasing is to listen to him, on bootlegs or on the late albums of traditional songs, perform songs that he didn't write—"Folsom Prison Blues," or "People Get Ready," or "Froggie Went A-Courtin'." He gets it all. When my children were little, we used to have a cassette around the house of songs for kids by pop stars, on which Dylan did "This Old Man" ("With a knick-knack paddywhack, give the dog a bone"). That performance had the weight of the whole world in it. I listened to it a hundred times and never got tired of it. You can refute Hegel, Yeats said, but not the Song of Sixpence. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

An Iliad, *by Alessandro Baricco, translated from the Italian by Ann Goldstein (Knopf; $21).* This retelling of the Homeric epic is defiantly modern: it excises the gods and supplants the omniscient narrator with alternating voices, as one character after another—hero and bit player alike—is granted the opportunity to speak and shed light on the decade-long siege of Troy. Alluding to our current time of "battles, assassinations, bombings," Baricco's text lingers on the futility of an unending war, and casts the arrival of the thousand-odd ships as an invasion by an overwhelmingly superior force, met by young recruits throwing stones. Still, in substance, his version cleaves closely to the original. As in Homer, the lesser-known foot soldiers come to life only at the moment of their death, when they enter history; each killing is singular, and almost lovingly detailed—a sword pierces a skull and a man falls, "teeth biting the cold bronze."

The Devil's Feather, *by Minette Walters (Knopf; $24).* In this uneven but scary thriller, Connie Burns, a white Zimbabwean war correspondent for Reuters, investigates five gruesome murders in Sierra Leone and follows a hunch, convinced that a British mercenary is using the mayhem of war zones to disguise his taste for raping and killing women. After a mysterious assailant kidnaps her and holds her prisoner for three days in Iraq, she becomes convinced that her quarry is now hunting her. She flees to Dorset, rents an isolated house that turns out to have a troubled history, and is befriended by a reclusive neighbor who, some years before, lost her entire family in a car crash. Given the ultra-contemporary world of the early part of the novel, the scenes in Dorset, where the author herself lives, seem parochial, but this does not lessen Walters's ability to use horror-movie logic to terrifying effect.



Strangers in the House, *by Dorothy Gallagher (Random House; $22.95).* These autobiographical essays, while brief, give a sharp picture of life on the edge of New York's literary world in the late twentieth century, from the sleep-around sixties ("You have the makings of a real little woman," Gallagher's analyst says, and leads her to his daybed) through the pretentious eighties (her boyfriend claims that he was Foucault's lover) and onward. Like most people, as she grows up, Gallagher becomes less representative. She marries the writer and editor Ben Sonnenberg, who has multiple sclerosis. She explores the doleful history of her Russian Jewish family. But these latter-day sorrows are told in the same wised-up, ironic, conversational voice that narrated the early chapters. Gallagher frames the story of her marriage to Sonnenberg with the story of their dog, who, like Sonnenberg's illness, wouldn't behave. She always knows more than she tells you, and she always trusts you to get the point.

Sex Collectors, *by Geoff Nicholson (Simon & Schuster; $25).* Long attuned to the libidinal energy of the collecting impulse, Nicholson sets out to investigate the people who collect erotic art, artifacts, and paraphernalia. The result is a cheerful, scattershot series of visits with various perverse obsessives—a septuagenarian former stripper who has amassed a history of burlesque in souvenirs; a trailer-park denizen who is one of the world's foremost erotic bibliographers; collectors of pornographic paintings, bookplates, vintage magazines. The book is fun but lacks both the cohesion and rigor of history or social science, and the depth and insight of true portraiture. Nicholson seems not to share the fastidiousness and completist tendencies of his collector subjects.

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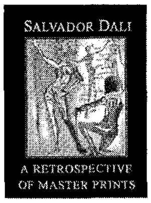

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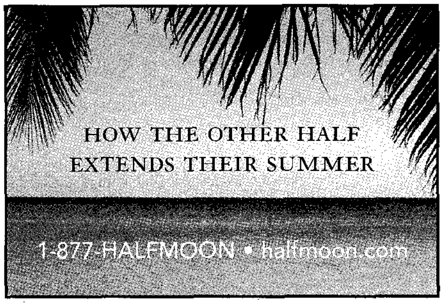

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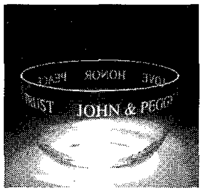

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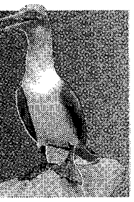

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THE THEATRE

WAGON TRAIN

"Mother Courage" at the Delacorte.

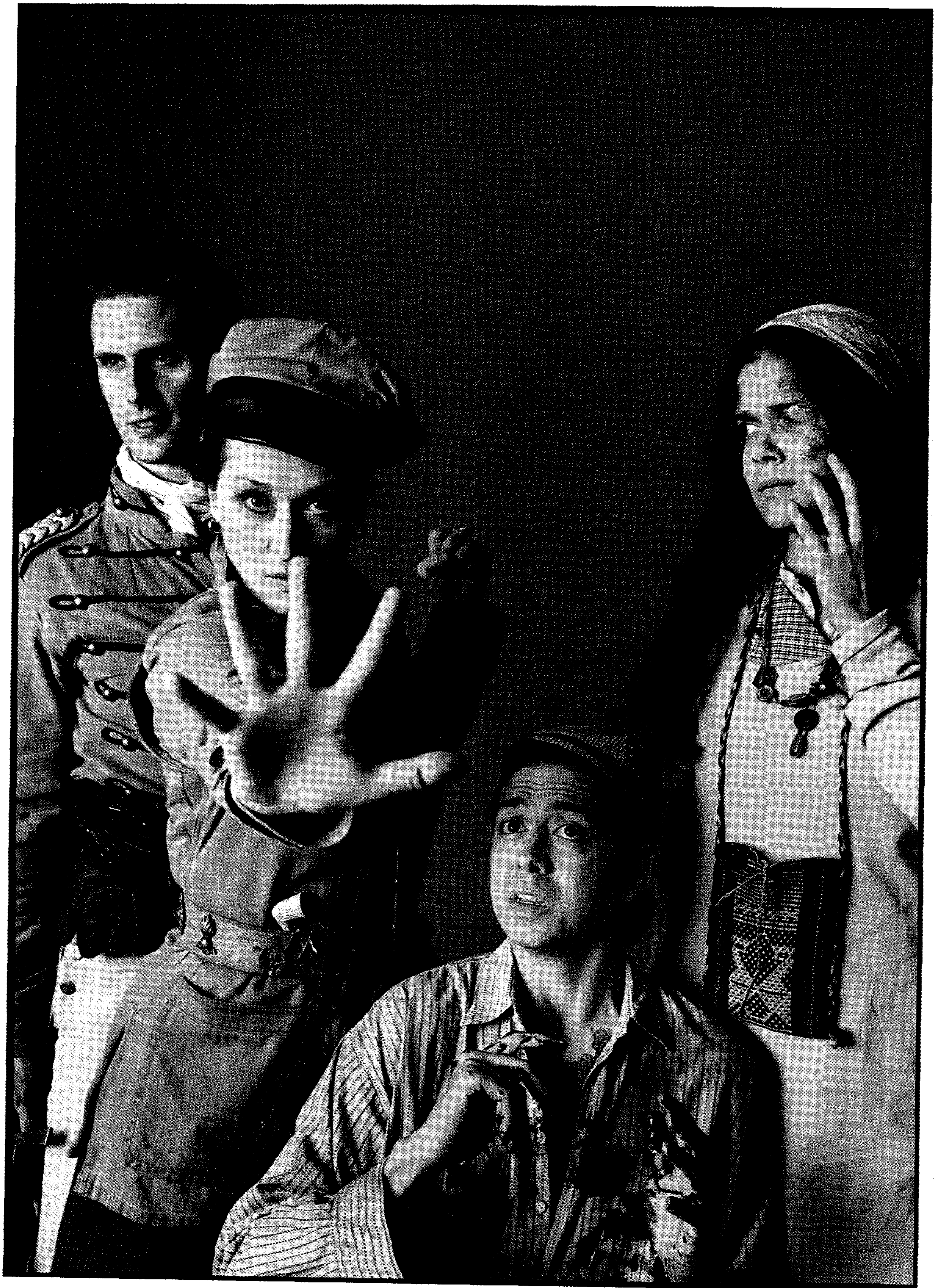
BY HILTON ALS

In 1982, when the city was plastered with posters advertising Meryl Streep's Oscar-winning portrayal of a Holocaust survivor in Alan J. Pakula's "Sophie's Choice," the images made one think less of poor doomed Sophie than of another performer entirely: the gender illusionist Candy Darling. With her bleached hair, pencil-thin eyebrows, and red stain of a mouth pulsating in a nearly Kabuki-white face, Streep's Sophie recalled the effects that Darling had devised for the camera during her brief time as one of Andy Warhol's haunting "superstars." (Darling died, of cancer, in her twenties.) In performances that poked fun at traditional female roles by reënacting them with utter seriousness, Darling epitomized the aesthetic of the late sixties and early seventies: irony laced with pathos. Jacob Brackman, in "The Put-On," a essay published in this magazine in 1967, wrote, "What was once an occasional surprise tactic . . . has been refined into the very basis of a new mode of communication. . . . This phenomenon is known as the 'put-on.' It occupies a fuzzy territory between simple leg-pulling and elaborate practical joke, between pointed lampoon and free-floating spoof."

Streep almost single-handedly ended the era of the free-floating spoof, as she ushered in the kind of nuanced psychological and historical narratives that would define the American film industry from the seventies on. Sophie Zawistowska, Karen Silkwood, Isak Dinesen, Lindy Chamberlain, Ethel Rosenberg—in her best roles, Streep has always managed to find a larger canvas to play against, one that has only underscored her fidelity to the truth of her characters. Whether she is playing a European, an Australian, or an American hardly matters: for us, she is a perennially "European" actress in her disavowal of the American urge to cultivate personal glamour. The subtle transformations of self that Streep enacts through gesture, costume, and vocal inflection—her dramatic alchemy—have made her that much more alluring and mysterious to us in the years since "Sophie's Choice."

Still, it's difficult to see Meryl Streep the actress without being dazzled by Meryl Streep the legend. Streep herself plays on this in her biography for the current staging of Bertolt Brecht's 1939 masterpiece "Mother Courage and Her Children" (a Public Theatre production, at the Delacorte): "Film: over 30 films. TV: three films. Awards: many, most deserved." And one can certainly be thrown off by her familiar mannerisms—staring into space, jiggling her ear with an index finger, fanning her hands to dismiss an unpleasant thought or person—but what immediately grabs the audience every time is her startling efficiency of manner. For Streep, acting seems to be less about stardust than about architecture. Each character is built precisely, according to its creator's specifications. For her performance in Tony Kushner's brilliant adaptation of "Mother Courage," Streep constructs a house that is gray and lopsided, a thespian's version of van Gogh's sad bedroom. Her grandeur is merely a façade, she seems to be telling us, and she is as committed to the job at hand as any other conscientious working actress.

"Mother Courage" takes place in a variety of locales in northern Europe, but its real setting is its heroine's wagon stocked with provisions that she sells to soldiers in need during the Thirty Years' War. We first encounter Mother Courage as she is pulled into a war-torn Swedish town by her two sons, Eilif (the charismatic Frederick Weller) and Swiss Cheese (Geoffrey Arend, who evokes a more subtle Peter Lorre). Standing on the wagon with her mute daughter, Kattrin (Alexandria Wailes), Mother Courage refuses to take sides in the war; politics is for those who can't afford to buy her wares. When a sergeant asks to see her papers—she has none—she explains, "They called me Courage because I was scared of financial



Frederick Weller, Meryl Streep, Geoffrey Arend, and Alexandria Wailes in "Mother Courage." Photograph by Brigitte Lacombe.

ruin, Sergeant, so I drove my wagon straight through the cannon fire at Riga, with fifty loaves of bread turning moldy, I didn't see that I had a choice."

Kushner has strained the lumps from the standard 1955 translation, by Eric Bentley. For instance, where Bentley's version reads:

> Let this be a lesson to you, Kattrin, never start anything with a soldier. The heavens do seem to open, so watch out! Even with men who're not in the army life's no honeypot. He tells you he'd like to kiss the ground under your feet . . . and then if you don't look out, your number's up, you're his slave for life.

Kushner has:

> You heard, Kattrin? Don't start up with soldiers. Love's not just licking up honey. He tells you he wants to kiss the ground over which your delicate feet have trod . . . and bang you're his goat cow mule and whatever else he's itching after.

In doing so, Kushner has also distilled Brecht's ideas about capitalism. He draws out both how Mother Courage prostitutes herself and how her children follow her lead. Even the presumably simple-minded Kattrin is drawn to the vulgarity around her. The inventive director, George C. Wolfe, does a fine bit of staging in a scene where Kattrin tries on and admires a whore's red shoes.

Before long, both of Mother Courage's sons have joined the Army, and Swiss Cheese is murdered. Even as tragedy encroaches on her, though, grief is given only the merest acknowledgment. Streep's controlled emoting remains firmly within the bounds of Brecht's vision of epic theatre. Instead of exhibiting her star power—fighting for face time with the audience, displaying the maximum emotion—she works in service to the play. Streep is a physically unprepossessing Mother Courage. With her fine features and girlish figure decked out in Bogart "Treasure of the Sierra Madre" drag (the burlapy, earth-toned costumes are by the talented Marina Draghici), and squeezing her money bag like a pair of testicles, she presents a sharp contrast to Gloria Foster's memorable performance in Ntozake Shange's adaptation at the Public, in 1980. Unlike Foster, whose portrayal was alternately witty and solemn, Streep is physically reckless. She seems to delight in the large stage; when Mother Courage chastises one of her children, she moves with the speed of a hen trying to save her young from the fryer. And, for "The Song of the Great Capitulation," the number that closes the first half of the show, she breaks through the fourth wall. Sitting in front of an Army officer's tent, Mother Courage listens to a young soldier's complaints about life before telling him just how little he knows of suffering. In a rough soprano, she sings, "Birdsong up above: / Push comes to shove. / Soon you fall down from the grandstand. . . . / And then: it's all downhill. / Your fall was God's will." The great capitulation, of course, is the relinquishing of youth's dreams. As the song goes on—to an appropriately spare, Weill-influenced score by Jeanine Tesori—Streep takes to the stage's apron, drawing closer to the audience. She stares directly into our eyes, and we see the one obstacle that Mother Courage cannot overcome: her closed-off heart. Life has disappointed her to the point of bitterness, and that bitterness is what fuels her now: for better or for worse, survival is the only ambition available to her in this morally compromised world.

While it is no shock that Streep and Wolfe are faithful to Brecht's theatrical philosophy, it comes as a pleasant surprise to see Kevin Kline invest himself to a similar degree. Kline—who was the terrifying Nathan in "Sophie's Choice," and Trigorin to Streep's Arkadina in Mike Nichols's 2001 production of "The Seagull"—is, quite possibly, the best partner Streep has had onstage or onscreen. As the cook, who loves Mother Courage, he lingers in the shadows of his character's melancholy before quietly erupting into a song of his own, framing his face in his hands and leering at the audience. One wants Mother Courage to love him because he accepts her and her tightfistedness. But she simply cannot break her habit of being.

The only distraction here is Jenifer Lewis, as the business-minded whore Yvette. Lewis is not an actress but a personality. She plays the part like a refugee from the chitlin' circuit. From time to time, her braying throws even Streep off. Still, like Mother Courage, we move on. At the end of the three-hour play, as Mother Courage hitches herself to her wagon, alone, she looks straight ahead, resembling not the carrion bird she is generally perceived to be but a life force, her eyes stripped of illusion, her heart pumping real feelings, swimming in real blood. ♦

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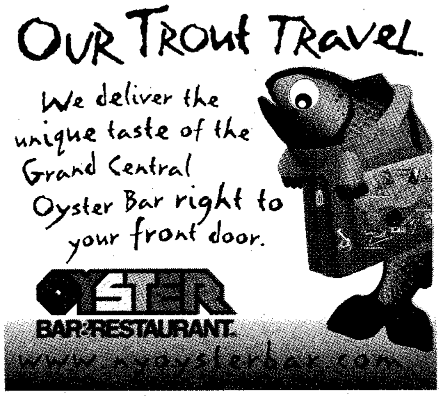
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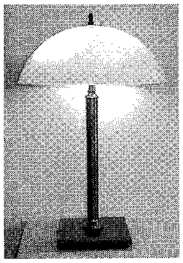

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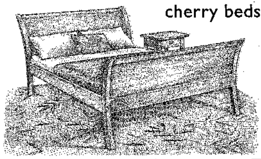

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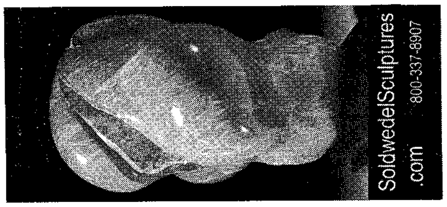

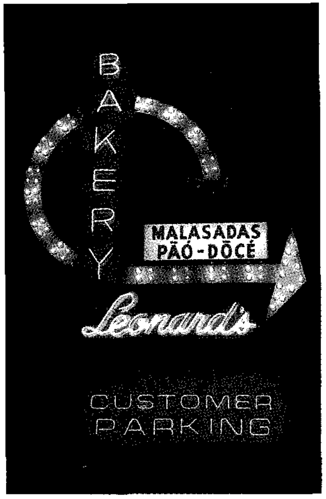

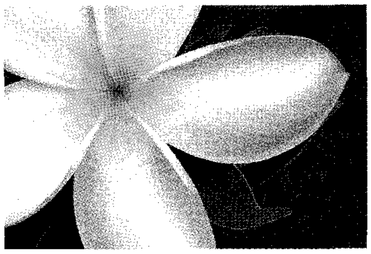

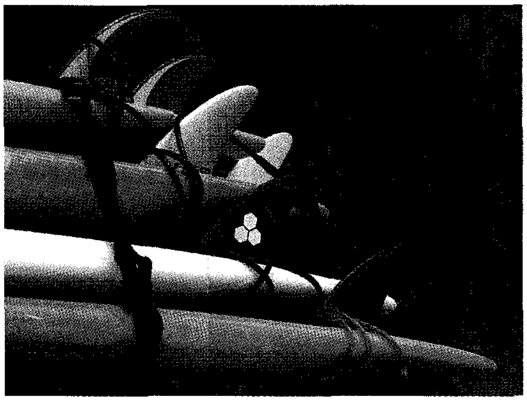

Unsung Honolulu

By Ian Thorne

Unless you live in Honolulu, the neighborhood of Kapahulu probably isn't familiar—even though it's sandwiched between two places known the world over, Waikīkī and Diamond Head.

Kapahulu is a jumble of architectural styles: one-and two-story commercial buildings with Art Deco or Art Moderne touches. It's the kind of place where Ginny Cabato, co-owner of the one-room Classic Surfboards store, can wear a T-shirt that reads "Eat * Sleep * Surf," and sit on the sidewalk with her dog, Angel, while greeting friends. "It's amazing," Cabato says. "You turn the corner out of Waikīkī and you're in a neighborhood."

In Kapahulu, you can find fishing and diving supplies, a kayak for sale or rent, or even a beautiful handcrafted wooden canoe paddle, for open ocean racing. Kapahulu is an athlete's paradise, but be sure to also visit its antique shops. For example, David Bailey, at Bailey's Antiques and Aloha Shirts has 12,000 vintage or reproduction aloha shirts in stock, ranging from $3.99 to $5,000 for a rare photo-print shirt, circa 1950. A Hollywood actor once bought $13,000 worth of aloha shirts here—but that particular star isn't the store's only celebrity shopper—their pictures are all over the counter area.

Kapahulu's specialty stores draw people from all over the world. But for locals, the neighborhood is a foodie's paradise, full of holes-in-the-wall serving everything from authentic Hawaiian to Egyptian cuisine. In fact, its best-known landmark is probably the pink-trimmed Leonard's Bakery, famous for its *malasadas,* the puffy sugarcoated Portuguese doughnuts that are a longtime favorite of Hawai‘i residents.

Kapahulu's residential area crawls up the hill toward Diamond Head. At its edge is Diamond Head Theatre, founded in 1915, the third-oldest continuously operating community theatre in the United States. Diamond Head puts on six productions a year, most of them full-scale Broadway-size musicals with an exemplary level of professionalism.

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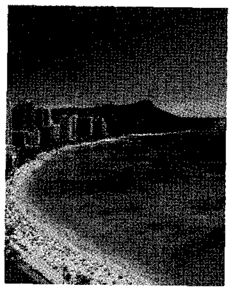

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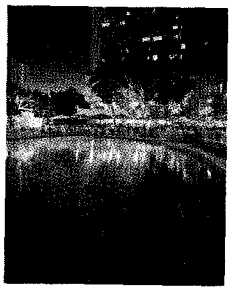

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Deals falling through in the Valley and on the Hill.

BY TAD FRIEND

Something about upscale houses in Los Angeles, all those black leather sofas and mirrors, always makes the visitor suspect that a porn video is being shot upstairs. "Million Dollar Listing," Bravo's six-episode reality show about real-estate agents in Hollywood and Malibu, encourages that suspicion. One homeowner, a former record producer and telephone psychic whose house has leopard-skin walls and a stripper pole, tells us that he often comes home "to find naked Czechoslovakian girls being filmed for *Hustler* or *Penthouse*," and an agent praises another property as a "James Bond sex palace." The agents, our guides, have names like Shannon, Chase, and Madison, and their bleached teeth sparkle as they show us hilltop aeries and beachside getaways that feature wet bars and poolside cabanas and sunken marble tubs. Yeah, baby!

It's all a bait and switch, though, because everyone is too busy trading up to hook up. One agent explains that a client "fell in love with" a $3.2 million fixer-upper—meaning that he wants to "buy a house and flip it, try to make a million bucks." Another agent keeps postponing her wedding arrangements so she can rack up record-setting commissions, and confides, "Some people affectionately call me the Condo Queen." But only people in the lovey-dovey world of adjustable-rate mortgages.

As with Bravo's signature "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," viewers will tune in not for the homey tips—"When showing a house, turn on all the lamps to brighten up rooms"—but for a peek at people's untidy private lives. A seller named Antoinette tells us that all that kept her sane as her marriage fell apart was her house on Mulholland Drive (a dump, but not far from Quentin Tarantino's place) and her cat, Topa. Now she has to sell, and Topa is hiding under the bed. When Antoinette gets an offer thirty-four thousand dollars above her asking price—an offer that will expire in twenty-four hours—she doesn't return her agent's frantic messages. Instead, she glugs champagne from a Big Gulp-size cup, "to calm me down." Then she drives off to see her hypnotist, carrying the cup for continuing solace. Later, she backs her car onto the curb. Finally, she gets her head together at her pedicurist's.

FOR SALE
SALE
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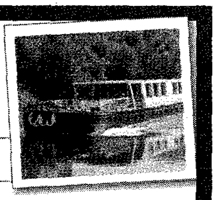
OR

In Bravo's reality show about California real estate, everyone is trying to trade up.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

California was the ideal locale for this show, since the state has more real-estate agents than annual home sales, so desperation is built into the system. It's also one of the few states that allow agents to represent both buyer and seller. An agent named Shannon McLeod, a vampy bottle blonde who sports a "$" tank top, demonstrates why that's a bad idea. She ends up being the agent for both parties in the prospective sale of a $2.4 million house in the Hollywood Hills, and things get ugly early. The house belongs to her lantern-jawed ex-fiancé, Jeff, and Shannon, we infer from her struggle to maintain her remarkably smooth countenance, has nostalgic memories of evenings spent in Jeff's Jacuzzi. She grows surly when she realizes that the only visitors to her first open house, a woman and her photographer husband, recently bought a neighboring house and are just snooping—and that Jeff has noticed that the woman's breasts are even bigger than hers, which I wouldn't mention if Shannon hadn't. Then, when a deal is threatened by issues raised by the inspection (every inspection seems to find mold, termites, and dry rot), she can barely stir herself to smooth things over.

But the fact that she's a terrible agent isn't what kills the sale; the problem is that Jeff isn't really ready to move out. Yes, a good agent knows how to coax and cajole a regretful seller. Yes, a good agent remembers to tell buyers that Goldie Hawn



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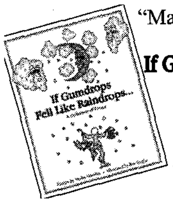

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and/or Charlie Sheen live somewhat nearby. Yes, a good agent has euphemisms for hideous interiors: "fun" or "very unique" or "so personalized." But we see bad agents move white elephants, while good ones get stuck with trophy homes. Deals collapse without warning, like houses in a mud slide. So magical thinking abounds. Peter Deep, a desperate seller, goes so far as to bury a St. Joseph statuette upside down in his back yard, and to offer up this prayer: "Please bring us an acceptable offer, or any offer, and help us sustain our faith in the real-estate market." When his house finally sells, for well below the asking price, he digs up his statuette to find its head snapped off. (And lo, the market has been sinking ever since.) Unlike "Survivor" or "The Apprentice," "Million Dollar Listing" offers no evident path for the players to follow toward self-transformation and victory, so there's no one to root for. That makes the show feel even emptier than you'd expect a show about real-estate agents to be.

For what it is, "Million Dollar Listing" is a well-crafted series: we always know what's at stake, because the subjects explain themselves in "sit-downs" or in "O.T.F.s," on-the-fly soliloquies. Such recaps have been a reality-show staple since MTV first aired "The Real World." But the Sundance Channel's "The Hill" is an exception. "The Hill" spans fifteen months of eat-your-spinach policy wrangles among the aides to the congressman Robert Wexler, a Florida Democrat, and its creators apparently didn't want to compromise their vision by making the material needlessly comprehensible.

The show's cinéma vérité scrupulousness makes us glean for ourselves how long Wexler has been in Congress (ten years); his political leanings (very liberal); or why he seems to be in disfavor with Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic leaders (perhaps because he's a maverick and a TV whore; the Los Angeles *Times* once called him "the human advertisement for the mute button"). And though C-SPAN junkies may know who Henry Hyde is and what committee he chairs and why it makes sense for Wexler to write him a letter about Iraq, the rest of us never do learn. Character isn't always revealed in action. Because we mainly see the congressman when his aides are jabbering at him, or handing him talking points during a phone interview, he comes across like Governor Gatling, the genial stooge on the old sitcom "Benson." Rarely do we glimpse his independence of mind.

The same is true of his aggressively ambitious staffers, whose days are spent rolling calls, checking CNN, scarfing take-out, and fighting over the wording of press releases. One, bemoaning her "pathetic, like, boring love life," says, "It's, like, all I do, Robert Wexler all the time." Halie Soifer, Wexler's bleeding-heart foreign-policy wonk, battles with Lale Mamaux, the hard-ass press secretary, on every conceivable issue, from how fiercely to attack George Bush to whether the office should pay for Halie's subscription to *The Economist*. The referee is the chief of staff, Eric Johnson, who's raising a son with another Wexler aide, James de Jesus. Eric is quick-tempered, cynical, and amusing. At one point, he declares, "I'd like a mail review" of constituent sentiment, then clarifies: "an *all*-male revue."

The staff's debates about how to fix Social Security or Darfur are Noh-like in their ritualizations; the aides don't make a case so much as allude to a topic sentence before adding "blah blah blah blah blah." They know all the arguments, and they also know how little a Democratic congressman matters in the Bush era. They're resentful not so much of the President's programs as of his power, the weenies.

Halie never quite grasps what her colleagues take for granted: that their debates are about politics rather than governance. In the first episode, shot in the fall of 2004, the staff roughs out a press release calling on Bush to lower flags to half-staff in recognition of the thousandth American combat death in Iraq. Halie thinks the deaths should be tied to Bush's failures, but Eric overrules her. He wants to box the Republicans in by making Wexler's proposal seem nonpartisan: "Then, when they don't sign it, they look bad." In the last episode, more than a year later, Halie wants Wexler to issue a statement supporting phased withdrawal from Iraq. "Ten more people are going to die in the next day," she says.

"And Robert's statement will save their lives," Eric replies dryly. "Understand, your need to do something isn't the same as its always being the right thing to do." That's a point the show's producers might ponder, next time around. ♦

POP MUSIC

SEX SYMBOLS

New albums from Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Aguilera, a former teen queen, shouts out to Etta James and Billie Holiday.

ROBERT SEBREE / LIME FOTO

Two ideas drive much of Christina Aguilera's new double album, "Back to Basics": one is that, as she states in the first song, she wants to "understand what made the soul singers and the blues figures that inspired a higher generation, the jazz makers and the groundbreakers"; the other is a recurring assertion that she has been misunderstood, and unfairly criticized. (One response to her alleged critics is a creepy track where, putatively celebrating her fans, she replays some of their voice-mail messages. It's a long way for Aguilera to go to remind us how "amazing" and "inspiring" she is.) In the course of twenty-two songs that move from the thrilling through the well-intentioned to the overwrought, it becomes clear that Aguilera's new album doesn't have all that much to do with the "blues figures" or the "jazz makers." That's fine—Aguilera doesn't need to reincarnate Sarah Vaughan to be a serious singer. She already is one, in the tradition of nineteen-nineties pop and R. & B., skillfully deploying melisma for razzle-dazzle, riding the bouncy syncopation of samples with the coördination of a rapper, and timing the phrases to imply her athletic dance moves—or, better yet, yours.

Aguilera, a small woman with a frighteningly capable voice, débuted in 1999 with one of teen pop's happiest moments, "Genie in a Bottle," a song driven by a broadly sexual metaphor: "You gotta rub me the right way." She tweaked her assigned role of coquette by making it clear that she could whisper ecstatically, on pitch, or sing hard enough to break bulletproof glass—who cared if she writhed around in the video? The album containing "Genie" went on to sell more than eight million copies. Aguilera's second album, "Stripped," contained several tracks written with Linda Perry, originally of the dull nineties rock band 4 Non Blondes and now one of pop music's reliable hired guns. (She is responsible for some of this decade's best radio hits, including Pink's "Get the Party Started.") Aguilera's irrepressible voice brings out the schmaltz in Perry. On "Stripped," Perry's most significant contribution was "Beautiful," a barn burner for everyone who has ever felt less than cute on a Friday night. "I am beautiful, no matter what they say—words can't bring me down," goes the chorus. The way Aguilera hits the last five words—which Perry wrote as a descending line, momentarily slowing the rhythm, in a motion that pulls against the lyric's prideful claim—produced her "Rocky" moment. You know she's going to raise her fists and jump when she reaches the top of the steps, but you get goose bumps anyway.

"Back to Basics" maintains the plucky spirit of "Stripped," and the songs on the second disk were co-written with and produced by Perry. In "Back in the Day," Aguilera names some of her "groundbreakers": "Break out the Marvin Gaye, your Etta James, your Lady Day, and Coltrane." Though you can't really argue with the choices, Aguilera lists her inspirations like a teen-ager with a MySpace page linking to her favorite bands; she establishes affinities, but saying doesn't make it so. She probably does love John Coltrane and Etta James, but, aside from a few diverting period pieces—like "I Got Trouble," a sepia-toned re-creation of early Billie Holiday engineered to sound like an old 78-r.p.m. disk, and "Candyman," a tribute to a sexy man that sounds like the Andrews Sisters—there are precious few audible connections to any music predating the seventies soul of Stevie Wonder. (She does effectively evoke him several times.) For all the carrying on about history, a high-concept glamour photo shoot in the CD's photo booklet—take that, downloaders!—is

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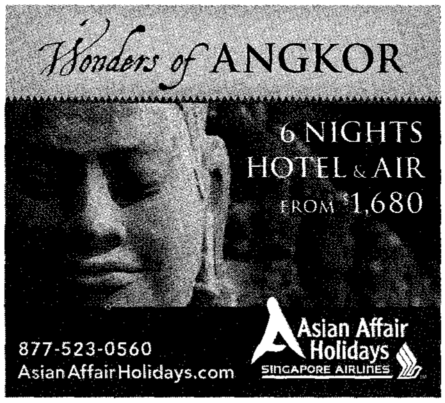

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Aguilera's most successful resurrection of the past.

Without a song as well written as "Beautiful," Perry and Aguilera circle the idea of sophistication to little apparent purpose and fill up the disk with sodden, obvious ballads. The ballads do, however, give Aguilera room to sing spectacularly—"Mercy on Me" is one of several examples. (She also, on "Save Me from Myself," apes Fiona Apple's quiet brand of self-torment.) It's a shame that Aguilera's voice outstrips her ambitions. She is a pleasure to listen to, no matter how daft the lyrics.

The first disk, with almost half the tracks produced by DJ Premier—a bona-fide hip-hop auteur who usually works with rappers—is more fruitful. Aguilera and Premier, along with a gifted songwriter named Kara DioGuardi, make tense and fervid dance music on the first single, "Ain't No Other Man." Premier provides a compressed drum pattern that pushes along and then pauses, like a mindful pedestrian, for the zooming delivery truck of two huge horn blasts. Aguilera begins her vocal with a long, vibrating "Hey" and moves into a supple holler when she sees her man—"Something about you caught my eye"—only to interrupt herself and drop into a double-time whisper: "I don't know what you did boy, but you had it."

"Still Dirrty" is another rich combination of DioGuardi's elastic melodies and Premier's brusque rhythms. But their talents are squandered on one of Aguilera's anxious impressions. "Still Dirrty" refers to the 2002 single "Dirrty," from "Stripped," which Aguilera promoted by performing in the video wearing little more than chaps, and in serious need of a bath. She seems to think that a major controversy resulted from her appearing so scantily clad, and concludes, "If I want to be provocative, well, that ain't a sin." Anybody who has a few minutes to walk down the street and scan the billboards, or thirty seconds to browse the Internet, will find this an epic understatement. It is hard to imagine what kind of real impediment she, or any other underdressed performer, is encountering.

Justin Timberlake is under an equally strange impression on "SexyBack," the first single from his modest but satisfying new album, "FutureSex/LoveSounds," where he bafflingly claims to be "bringing sexy back." Does anything need bringing back *less* than sexy? It's like proposing to bring back petroleum, or the N.F.L. Like Aguilera, Timberlake began his career on the "Mickey Mouse Club," proceeded to experience enormous popularity as a member of the boy band 'NSync, and then trundled off toward maturity, trying to put some distance between himself and the preteen squeals. As on his first album, the excellent and sleek "Justified," from 2002, Timberlake collaborated with the producer Timbaland, one of the most important forces in the past ten years of pop music. After slowing down for more than a year, to devote time to weight lifting, Timbaland has returned to the charts, with the singer Nelly Furtado, whose playful single "Promiscuous" stayed at No. 1 for six weeks this summer. Perhaps Timbaland still had Furtado's quirky, charismatic voice in mind. The beat for "SexyBack" is so small it's barely there—it needs either a big, gruff m.c. to fill up all the spaces or a tiny, girlish voice to wind around the synthetic underbrush. Timberlake does neither; his voice is sweet but not flexible, and he is at his most believable when creating breathy, multi-tracked harmonies and playing the sincere side of seduction. On "SexyBack," Timberlake does his best to be callous and thuggish, an imitation of the bad boys he convinced your mom he would never be. (If there is anyone in pop less comfortable singing the word "motherfucker," he hasn't made a record yet.)

Most of "FutureSex/LoveSounds" sticks to the uncanny, ethereal funk that made "Justified" so appealing, and is savvy enough to retain Timberlake's image as a teen cutie pie while making the sounds around his voice just shiny enough to fit the album into the landscape of 2006 pop. "My Love" is based on the kind of effortlessly odd beat that earned Timbaland his reputation: a shuddering keyboard figure that keeps trailing off and then coming back; gross, loping bass sounds; and samples of human beatboxing. Timberlake is back on bended knee, where he is most comfortable: "If I wrote you a symphony, just to say how much you mean to me, what would you do? If I told you you were beautiful, would you date me on the regular—tell me, would you?" There is no shame in going back to your own basics. ♦

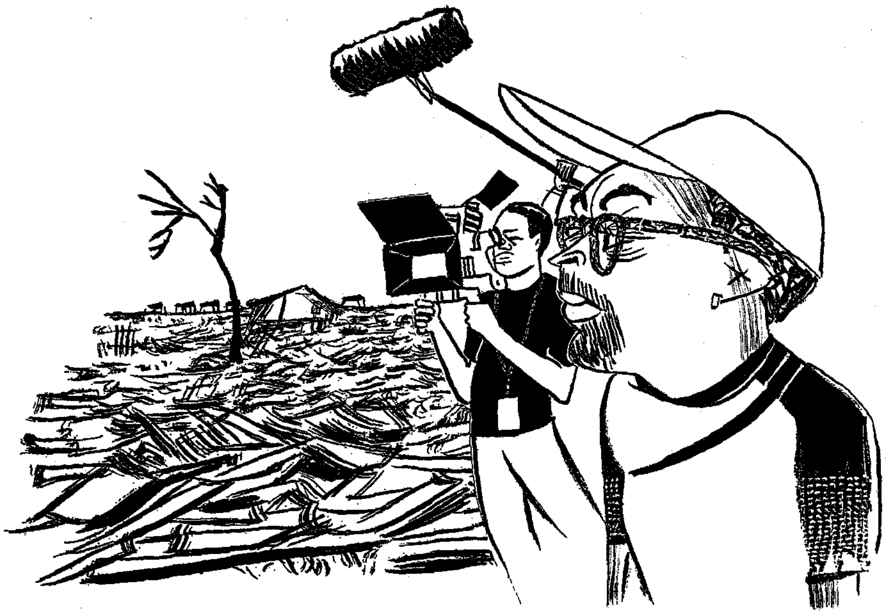
THE CURRENT CINEMA

DISASTERS

"When the Levees Broke" and "Snakes on a Plane."

BY DAVID DENBY

In the course of Spike Lee's enormous documentary about Hurricane Katrina and the city of New Orleans, "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts," the director shows us a curious funeral on the city's streets. In broad daylight, in the midst of smashed homes, a group of men dressed in formal black-and-white accompany a horse-drawn hearse that bears a casket marked "Katrina." Walking in front of the hearse, musicians from the Hot 8 Brass Band play a traditional hymn. They play it slowly, however—so slowly that the "funeral" is as much an act of derision as of mourning. At the end of the film, Lee returns to the procession, but by this time, in adherence to New Orleans custom, the men are playing the hymn up-tempo, with a defiant swing; the Katrina casket has been rudely placed on the street, and the men shimmy around it. I would like to interpret the fast tempo and the shimmy as a sign of renewal, but who knows? Throughout the movie, the people of New Orleans come off as complicated and witty beyond easy measure. They will keep New Orleans alive, but, as the movie makes clear, they will keep it alive with whatever ironies of grief and mockery please their taste and their humor.



Spike Lee visited New Orleans nine times in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

TOM BACHTELL

Viewers seeking detailed information about the economy and the politics of New Orleans will have to go elsewhere. But anyone hoping to reclaim Katrina emotionally—to experience what the city went through in all its phases of loss, anger, and contempt—needs to see Lee's movie, which is surely the most magnificent and large-souled record of a great American tragedy ever put on film. ("When the Levees Broke" will be aired in its entirety on HBO on August 29th and September 1st, 7th, 10th, 11th, 16th, and 28th; it will also be available from HBO's on-demand service until September 27th.) After the storm, HBO commissioned a two-hour picture, but Lee visited the city nine times and wound up doubling the length. It's a complicated story he has to tell, encompassing the storm, the flood, the evacuation to the Superdome, the looting, waiting for the Feds, more waiting for the Feds,

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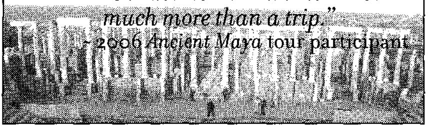

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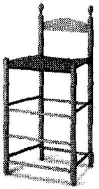

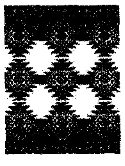

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analysis of the broken levees, and attempts at rebuilding. My guess is that Lee didn't have the heart to cut down the terrifying footage he had gathered or the mostly remarkable interviews that constitute the main body of the movie. Keeping his own voice largely absent and his presence invisible, he finds the city's tattered survivors. He also consults a variety of lawyers and local politicians, and such luminaries as Harry Belafonte and Al Sharpton; the musicians and New Orleans natives Wynton Marsalis and Terence Blanchard (the latter wrote much of the beautiful music for the film); the historian Douglas Brinkley, who makes impassioned critiques of Bush Administration officials and the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and the Mississippi man (a doctor) who publicly advised the Vice-President, when he visited the area long after the storm, to go fuck himself.

Lee draws on stock, news, and amateur footage, and also on still photographs, some of which capture, with the devastating power of the greatest poetry or painting, the charnel house on water that New Orleans had become. In the four hours, there are repetitive passages but nothing that isn't arresting or moving, and, for all its length, "When the Levees Broke" is essentially a lyric work—a kind of blues documentary, saturated in New Orleans's foundational music and warmed with the traditions of cadenced outrage and lament heard in the Lower Ninth Ward and other abused neighborhoods. "When I seen the water, I knew we had to get out," a man recalls. He says he told his mother that they had to leave: "And she say, 'Why we have to go?' And I explain it to her that the water was comin' up, risin' up"—an exchange that sounds like lines from a Delta-blues classic. The co-producer of the film, Sam Pollard, was also the chief editor, and, with his editing team (Geeta Gandbhir and Nancy Novack), he shifts among the interviews, hurricane footage, and stills with an almost tidal alternation of emotional intensity and rest. In a video montage, grouped shots of corpses floating in the water or sprawled on a car roof are held long enough for us to register the horror of abandonment but not so long that the shots draw attention to themselves as spectacle. The movie is heroic in the delicacy of its craftsmanship.

After the storm, with the government gone, their houses wrecked or displaced, and both official and private papers destroyed in the flood, the residents of such places as the Lower Ninth lack elementary validation. Stubbornly, they cling to their lots, virtual squatters on their own property. Spike Lee finds them there, planted amid stray boards and rotted couches. In his feature films, Lee has always possessed a gift for tirade, but this time he doesn't have to write anything; he has only to release the flow. A few of his subjects are sombre and stunned, but others scorch the camera with the ferocity of their invective, especially a forty-two-year-old African-American woman named Phyllis Montana LeBlanc, who is blessed with a special skill: as her temper rises, she gets funnier and funnier, and Lee brings her back repeatedly as she re-creates the stages of official bungling in the aftermath of the storm—the delays, the incomprehensible orders, the simple failure on the part of people allegedly trained to handle emergency to understand how emergency works. The movie has a surprising amount of joking and New Orleans mischief and orneriness. There's one element that seems unredeemable—the dead citizens lying all over the city, bloated and discolored. It's the primal curse of the Greek myths: the unburied corpse, an offense against the gods and against civilization, too. That's why the mock funeral at the end of the movie, whatever its precise meaning, is the most eloquent of gestures. Society may have collapsed, but a proper burial is still fitting. The citizens of New Orleans graciously grant to the storm the courtesy that the storm, in its rage, could not grant to them.

In the accurately named "Snakes on a Plane," the snakes bite the passengers on the neck, the chest, the eyes, and even more vulnerable spots; they slither into the cockpit, wrap themselves around oxygen masks, and investigate the underclothes of a middle-aged woman. A non-poisonous snake—a boa constrictor—eats a dog and an Englishman. There isn't much that the snakes don't do, except perhaps pick better movies for the long-haul flights. The audience goes to a movie like this in a spirit of low connoisseurship and trash-loving glee. Last fall, when the title was announced, it was obvious that the movie was nothing more than a marketing concept; the purity of the quick grab for a buck amused and enchanted millions. Quickly, a giddy atmosphere developed on the Internet; the movie became the subject of songs, mock trailers, merchandising contests, Pennsylvania Dutch quilting bees. The audience decided to sell "Snakes" to itself, and that became the event—the actual movie could never have been more than another exploitation picture. A typically profane Samuel L. Jackson line became an Internet joke even though it wasn't in the film. Well, it's in the film now. It was added when, in March, New Line, the production company, shot extra footage to juice up the thrills. On opening day in New York, groups of the initiated showed up at theatres in a happy mood, whooping and hollering and urging the serpents to do the nasty.

Attempting to enter into the spirit of the event, I found myself put off by the slickness of the production. Intentional low camp always seems wrong unless it's very funny; in trash, one wants clumsiness, even a certain tackiness, and this movie has the production values and the high-tech fluency of a much bigger movie. Since the story doesn't make the slightest sense, a moviegoer is reduced to the sordid task of admiring how smoothly a digital snake crawls out of someone's mouth. I appreciated the relative anonymity of the actors (one doesn't want recognizable faces in trash), but what is Samuel L. Jackson doing in "Snakes on a Plane"? Fixing the passengers with his baleful stare and ironclad voice, he can't relax; he has to assert his authority every second, and he's so clenched and angry that he falls to the level of the material. And what are children doing in the movie? One little boy has to take care of his tiny brother on the flight. Watching them sit there in terror as the smaller one gets bitten is not the best kind of fun. Mistakes like these made me wonder if the director, David R. Ellis, is really in on the joke. "Snakes on a Plane" kills off half its characters, and, as in so many B movies that depend on horror-film tropes, the selfish and the pleasure-seeking are punished with death, and the virtuous and the kindly are allowed to survive. The young couple with luscious flesh who crowd into the bathroom to make out no sooner take off their clothes than they get fanged; a man who is rude and haughty is quickly disposed of. "Snakes on a Plane" may mark a new participatory style in marketing, but it still gulls an allegedly knowing audience with the pseudo-morality of yesteryear. ♦

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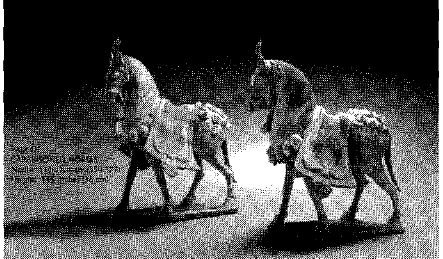

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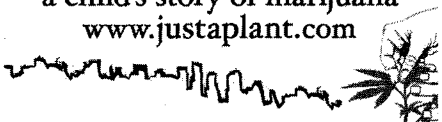

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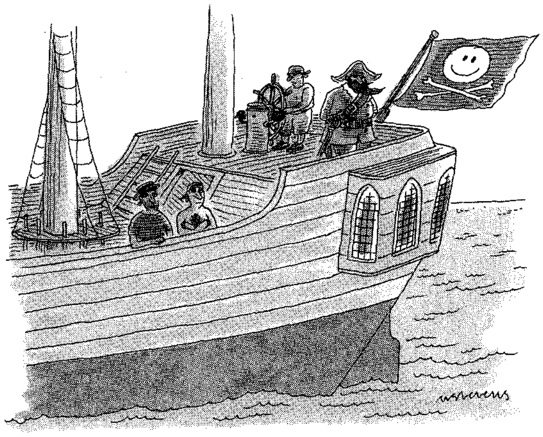
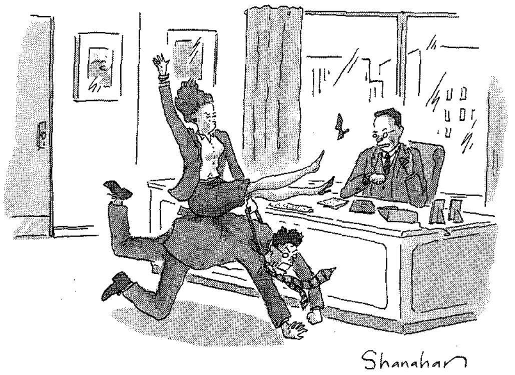
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Leo Cullum, must be received by Sunday, September 3rd. Finalists in the August 21st contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 18th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Aye, and he replaced walking the plank with time out."
Thomas Roth, Atlanta, Ga.



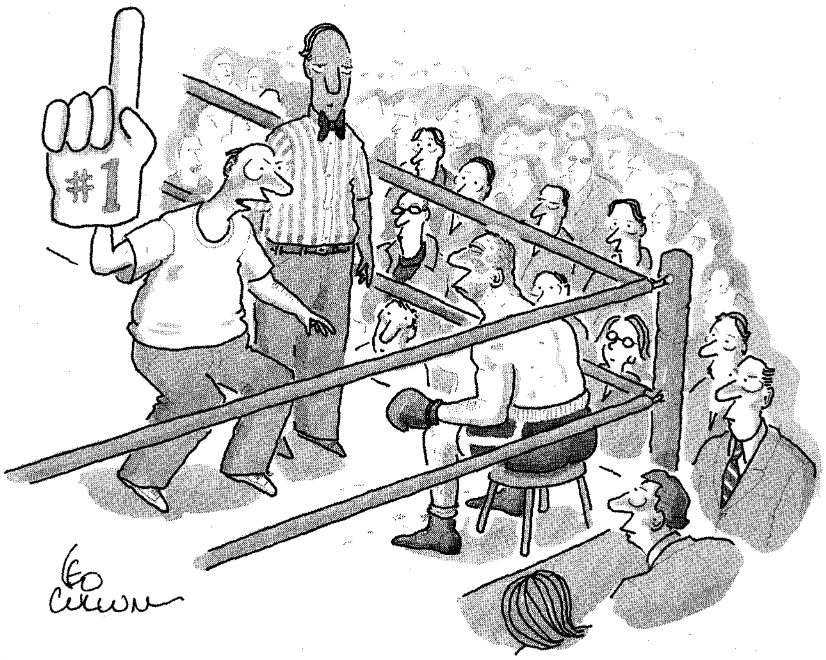
THE FINALISTS

"This new M.B.A. crop is so hard to break."
Laura Wantz, Laguna Beach, Calif.

"Just five more seconds and you'll break the record set by Tex and Dolly Rosenberg in Accounting."
Wayne Barr, Merrick, N.Y.

"O.K., let's wrap up and call it a day. I feel like we're losing our focus."
Walker Robb, Seattle, Wash.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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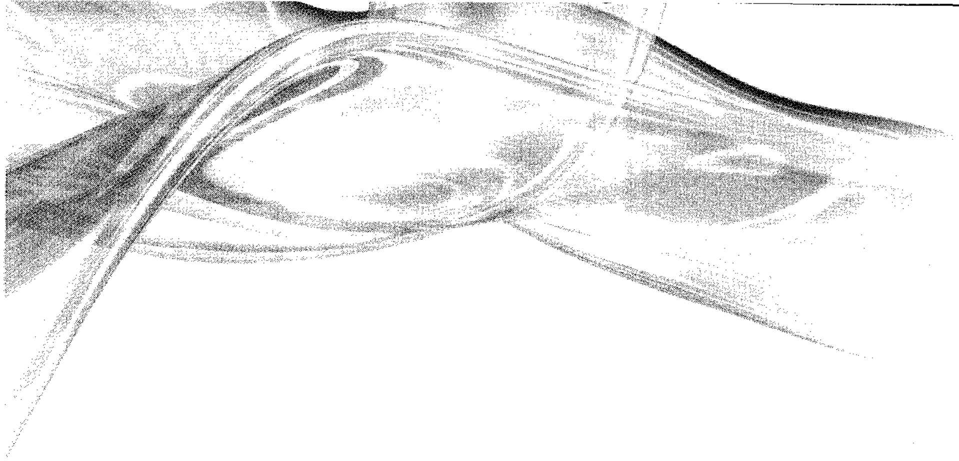

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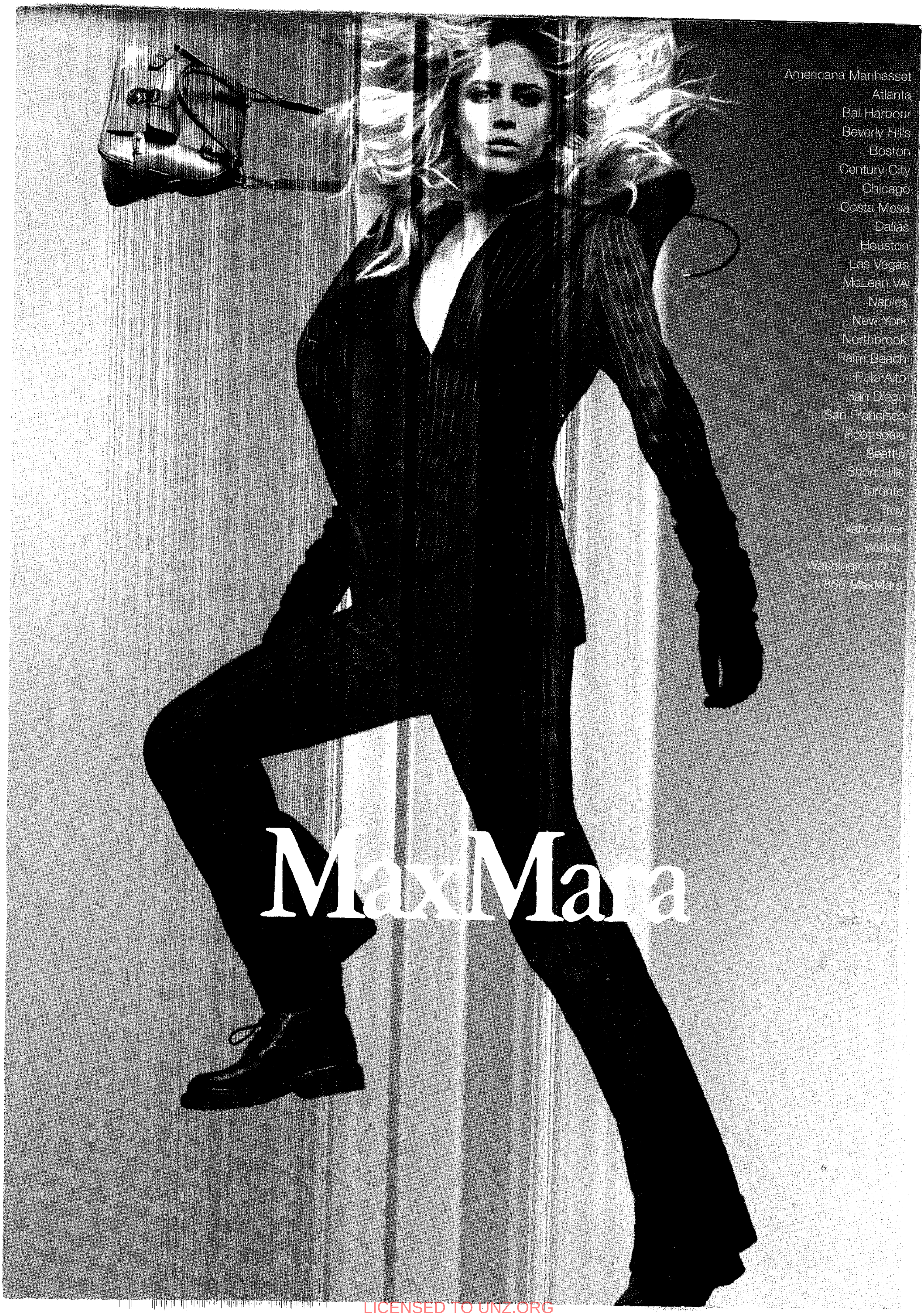

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